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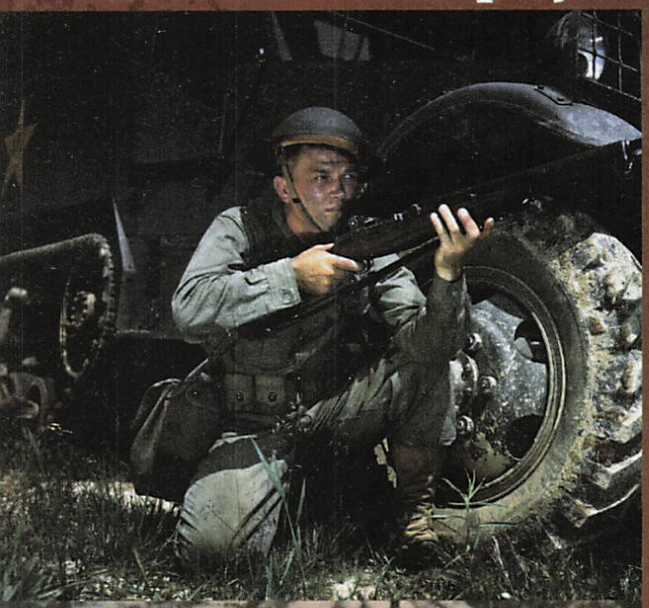

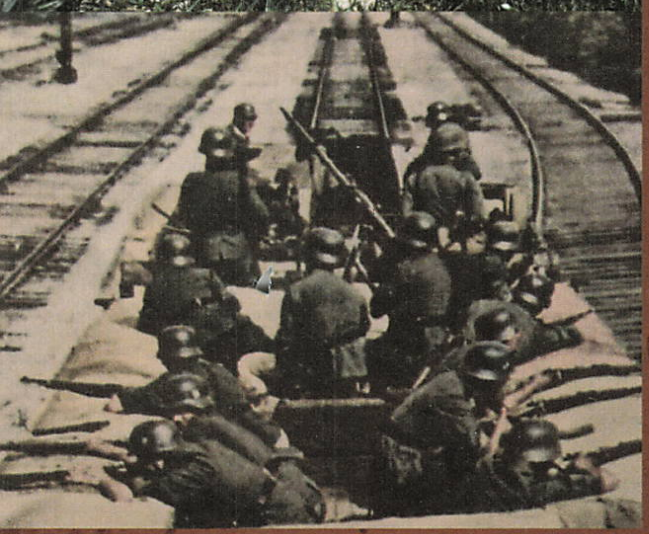

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Cover: British General Miles Dempsey confers with Brig. Gen. James M. Gavin, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division during Operation Market Garden. See story page 40. Photo: National Archives

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Editorial

A stirring chapter of naval history steeped in controversy.

WHILE AMERICAN TROOPS SLUGGED IT OUT WITH THE JAPANESE ON THE Philippine island of Leyte, one of the greatest battles in the history of naval warfare raged far and wide in the surrounding waters. The Battle of Leyte Gulf, fought October 23-26, 1944, was actually a series of smaller naval actions that eventually gutted the Imperial Japanese Navy as a fighting force.

One of these encounters, the Battle off Samar, includes one of the most gallant episodes in the combat history of the U.S. Navy, but has also led to an enduring controversy. On October 25, the escort carriers, destroyers, and destroyer escorts of Admiral Thomas Kinkaid's U.S. 7th Fleet stood off the landing beaches at Leyte, supporting the efforts to supply and reinforce the troops ashore. The escort carriers' aircraft and the small warships were there as a screen against Japanese planes and submarines that might threaten the landings. They were never intended to take on a powerful enemy surface fleet. Bu that is just what happened.

Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, commander of powerful Task Force 38, which included Essex-class fleet carriers and fast battleships, was ordered to cover the landings against any substantial enemy naval threat; however, the first priority as Halsey saw it was the destruction of the remaining Japanese aircraft carriers.

The Japanese realized this, and in keeping with their penchant for complex planning devised a scheme to lure Halsey away from the invasion beaches to attack the Northern Force, under Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa. The Japanese carriers had actually been depleted of planes and posed only a nominal challenge to any American shipping. However, the Japanese correctly assumed that their presence would be enough to attract Halsey's full attention.

When the Northern Force was located, Halsey ordered the fast battleships and carriers of Task Force 38 to steam toward Cape Engano (ironically the name translates from Spanish as "lure" or "hoax") to annihilate the enemy carriers. In doing so, he left the small ships of the 7th Fleet, particularly Task Force 77.4.3, also known as "Taffy 3," under Admiral Clifton A.F. Sprague, without support.

On the morning of October 25, a powerful Japanese force of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers, including the most powerful warship in the world, the super battleship *Yamato* mounting 18-inch main guns, steamed through San Bernardino Strait into the area guarded by Taffy 3 and other elements of the 7th Fleet. Admiral Takeo Kurita ordered his ships to attack. In response, the gallant American destroyers and destroyer escorts gamely fought back, chasing salvoes from heavy Japanese guns, firing away with five-inch main batteries, and charging in to launch torpedoes while forcing the enemy ships to take evasive action. The escort carriers' available aircraft made repeated attacks, some without bombs and even dropping depth charges. They strafed and harassed the Japanese.

In the end, the heroes of Taffy 3 lost two escort carriers, two destroyers, a destroyer escort, and numerous aircraft, and sustained more than 1,000 casualties. In exchange, though, the Japanese lost three cruisers sunk and three damaged. Kurita was confused. As his task force neared the brink of success, approaching the vulnerable transports and supply ships off the Leyte landing beaches, Kurita lost his nerve and ordered his force to retire. He actually believed he had encountered the heavy ships of Halsey's Task Force 38, which was far to the north. The heroism and sacrifice of the American sailors and airmen, against overwhelming odds, had saved the day—miraculously.

Halsey concluded his northern adventure with little result. His conduct became the subject of vigorous debate, and there was plenty of finger pointing. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet, wrote to Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations, plainly stating, "It never occurred to me that Halsey, knowing the composition of the ships in the Sibuyan Sea, would leave San Bernardino Strait unguarded, even though the Jap detachments in the Sibuyan Sea had been reported seriously damaged."

Halsey defended his conduct for the rest of his life.

—*Michael E. Haskew*

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History's Most Famous Pistol

The German Luger became a legend and a highly prized souvenir for Allied troops during World War II.

THE GERMAN LUGER IS, MOST LIKELY, THE MOST FAMOUS PISTOL IN MODERN warfare. Almost every World War II movie ever made featuring German armed forces seems to show it as an integral part of its action sequences.

It also played a prominent role in World War I and was carried by the armed forces of many nations. Switzerland's army used it from 1900 into the 1970s, while the Soviet Army had 8,000 captured Nazi weapons in stock, which were never used. Invented by German arms designer Georg Luger, it was manufactured in at least 10 variants.

Officially described as "a toggle-locked, recoil-operated, semi-automatic pistol," the Luger was developed to improve upon the Borchardt automatic pistol and was originally known as the Parabellum automatic pistol, Borchardt Luger system manufactured by Deutsche Waffen und Munitionsfabriken (DWM) in its initial production unit, the Model 1900 Parabellum.

Besides DWM, later models were manufactured by W+ F Bern, Simson, Mauser, Vickers, Imperial Erfurt Arsenals, and Heinrich Krieghoff. The Swiss Army the first to adopt it as its official sidearm in May 1900. Had German Kaiser Wilhelm II actually invaded Switzerland as he once playfully threatened, his troops would have been fired upon by weapons of their own making.

Modified in 1908 as the 9/9mm Parabellum, the Luger became noted as the weapon for which the 9x19mm Parabellum cartridge was introduced. It is estimated that more than three million Lugers were built during their long service run. Various submachine guns had seen valuable and effective trench warfare service during the Great War, with experimentation done as well via pistol conversions into fully automatic hand-held sidearms, among them the P08, in which the Luger displayed a substantial rate of fire.

The Luger was 8.74 inches long, with a barrel length of 4.7 inches (3.9 inches in the short version and 7.9 inches in its artillery version); a weight of one pound, 15 ounces; a rate of fire of 116 rounds per minute in its semiautomatic modality; and a muzzle velocity of 1,148 to 1,312 feet per second in its 9mm short-barrel configuration. With its iron sights, the trusty Luger had an effective firing range of 56 yards in its short-barrel edition, boasting a feed system of an eight-round, detachable box magazine plus a 32-round magazine if needed.

Born in Austria at Steinach am Brenner on March 6, 1849, Georg Johann Luger was the son of a surgeon who later moved the family to Italy, where he taught

German soldiers dash forward during operations early in World War II. These men are armed with the distinctive potato masher hand grenade and the famed Luger pistol.

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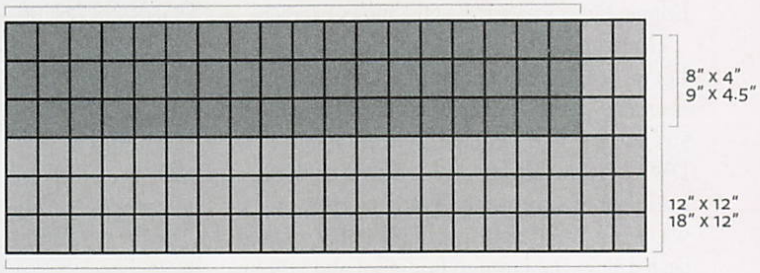

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at the Austrian-dominated Padua University, with his son learning to speak Italian as well as German. Following graduation from university preparatory school, young Georg next studied at the Vienna Commercial Academy, later known as the Vienna Business School.

After graduation, Georg Luger enlisted in the autumn of 1867 as a reserve officer cadet in Kaiser Franz Josef's Imperial 78th Infantry Regiment. He was promoted to officer cadet corporal on June 1, 1868, and then ensign the following October. His surprisingly good pistol marksmanship soon made him an instructor at the elite Austro-Hungarian Military Firearms School at the dual monarchy's Camp Bruckneudorf, where his intense interest in automatic pistol-loading systems began.

Later establishing himself in a comfortable living as a civilian accountant, Luger wed Elisabeth Josefa Dufek in 1873. The couple had three sons by 1884. The eldest became a civil engineer, joining his father in martial weaponry development, while the second son was killed in 1915 while fighting as an reservist captain against the Imperial Russian Army on the Galician Front during the Great War.

Georg Luger's business career was aided when he became a manager of Vienna's top-flight Jockey Club, enabling him to make many important future contacts. One of these was famed gunmaker Ferdinand von Mannlicher, whom he met in 1875. The two were soon working jointly on designs for new rifle magazines. This experience was later credited with helping Luger's native design abilities to emerge.

Hired in 1891 by the Berlin firm of Ludwig Loewe & Cie, Luger became a consulting engineer as well, and three years later he demonstrated a Hugo Borchardt firearm built by DWM for the U.S. Army. Criticism of the gun led Luger to improve the handgun, from which was born the Parabellum Luger that proved such a financial boon to both him and DWM.

Mechanically and operationally, the famed pistol features a toggle-lock action that employs a locking jointed arm rather than the slide action of many other semiautomatic pistols. After a round is fired, both the barrel and its toggle assembly move backward in recoil, with both locking together.

The toggle hits the built-in cam in the Luger's frame, making the knee joint hinge, with the toggle and assembly then unlocking. Striking the frame, the pistol's barrel halts its movement to the rear, while the toggle keeps moving, bending the knee joint, extracting the fired casing from the chamber and ejecting it. Following this action, the toggle and breech jointly come forward via tension by spring, with the next round fed from the magazine to the empty chamber. The entire operation is completed in a fraction of a second.

The Luger works well with cartridges of higher pressure. Those of lower pressure may cause the pistol to malfunction, as not enough recoil occurs for the action to be completed, causing breech blockage by not clearing the magazine's top-most cartridge or jamming on its base.

Due to both German- and Swiss-made Lugers being manufactured with the era's highest quality materials and the manufacturers use of precision tolerances with tough, minute standardization, the Luger was world renowned for its durability. Indeed, its design mandated the manual fitting of some parts for proper functioning. Assembling a pistol using another weapon's side plate at times stopped its sear—the catch that holds the hammer of the gun's lock in the cocked or partially cocked position—from operating properly, causing the weapon to malfunction.

Jaybe Militaria

ABOVE: A German soldier holds his 9mm Luger pistol at the ready during operations in a village on the Eastern Front in 1943. TOP: The easily recognized profile and mystique of the 9mm Luger pistol made it a highly prized souvenir among Allied troops.

Fixing the Luger's rigidly positioned barrel to the barrel extension and front sight carriage provided its famous, superb accuracy. It has generally been reputed to be one of the most accurate of auto-loading pistols, making it preferred over any other revolver or pistol of its time.

This led to the Model 1900 and Swiss Lugers being designated as the selected firearm for officers, non-coms, and even cavalry of Germany, the United States, and Switzerland. Its first reported combat service was against Chinese irregular forces during the 1900 Boxer Rebellion at the imperial capital of Peking.

The U.S. Army's Board of Ordnance bought 1,000 Model 1900 Parabellums with 4.75-inch barrels after initial test firing at its Springfield, Illinois, armory on April 16, 1901. These were duly marked with both iconic American Eagle stamps over their chambers and with the customary American ordnance bomb proofs, then provided to all Army cavalry troops for more rugged field trials.

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issued to light artillery troops and officers at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. More purchases came in 1902, and additional test firing took place in 1904, leading to numerous other nations buying the weapon. Large quantities of commercial models were exported until World War I.

Over time, the so-called Borchardt-Luger nomenclature evolved into the more popular and simpler Luger in its international marketing and advertising. As with the later American-made Thompson sub-machine guns, lawmen and outlaws alike soon made the Luger a deadly weapon of choice.

The neutral Swiss Army adopted the Model 1900 as its standard sidearm on April 4, 1901, giving way in 1906 to a variation of the earlier model. This 1906 variant was made and assembled in Bern, Switzerland, in 1918.

In 1929, the Swiss improved their version with better sights, a better trigger, and a tougher toggle link. This model endured into the 1960s, despite the introduction of a new military sidearm in 1948.

In 1904, the Imperial German Navy brought into service the Pistole 1904 Parabellum 9mm sidearm, also known as the Marine Model 1904. Its name was shortened by U.S. seamen to the Navy Luger, and it was improved in 1906 with the addition of a coiled mainspring.

That same year, Georg Luger introduced the New Model, which substituted the former flat, laminated mainspring with an updated and more reliably designed coil. Lugers were thereafter all designated New Models, with their older brethren brought up to the novel specifications as well. A carbine version with a rifle-like stock was introduced along with an artillery version that featured both a removable stock and a 32-round Trommelmagazine 08, popularly known as the snail drum magazine.

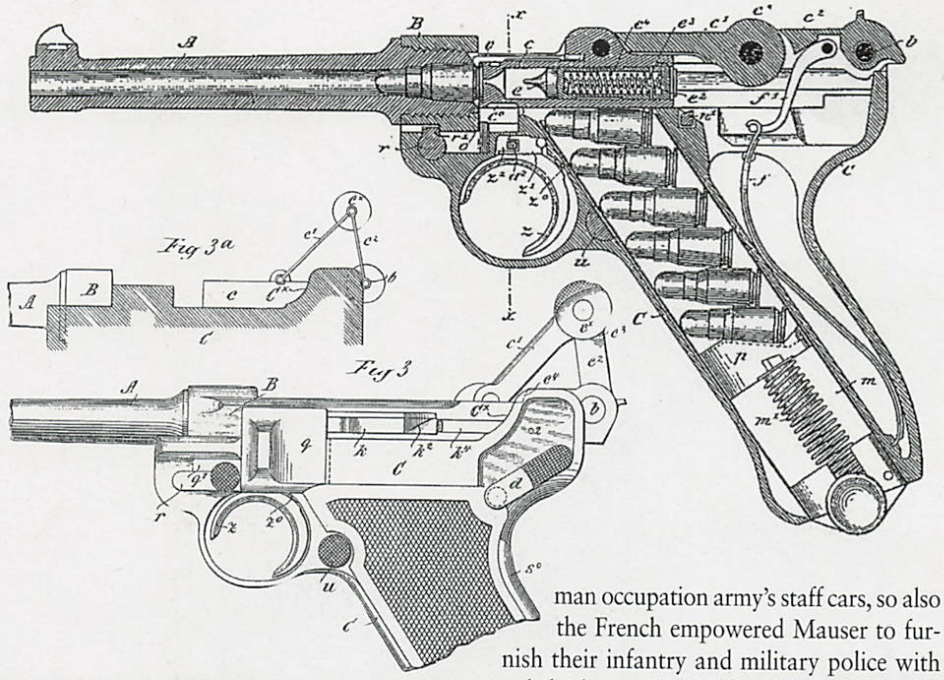
More American pistol trials followed in 1907, after which both Luger and DWM refused the Army's request to manufacture 200 Lugers firing .45-caliber ammunition to compare with both Colt and Savage pistols. As a result, the German firm deserted the competition.

After further German modifications for the Imperial German Army in 1908, the now famous Luger served throughout World War I, with more than a million seeing combat.

In addition, the artillery Luger 08 was authorized by Kaiser Wilhelm II on July 2, 1913, its stock making it a substitute carbine in combat.

Prior to the installation of fixed, mounted machine guns in German fighters, pilots fought the enemy with Lugers in aerial combat. As machine guns replaced them in the air, so too did MP18 sub-machine guns in ground combat, with postwar exportation of the now globally famous Lugers continuing into the 1930s.

During the interwar period, many knockoff Lugers were manufactured for U.S. import by Abercrombie & Fitch, A.F. Stoeger, Inc., and the Pacific Arms Co., reportedly with AFS successfully registering the name Luger in North America by 1929.



The patent drawings for the famed Luger pistol reveal its inner complexity. The Luger was a reliable pistol that was often worn as an officer's sidearm.

Allegedly, these AFS models became the first to have the name Luger stamped on the receiver's side. The following year, the Mauser firm acquired the manufacturing rights from DWM, six years after the death of the pistol's original designer, Georg Luger.

By 1941, Mauser had begun "salting blue" the entire weapon and installing cheaper black Bakelite handgrip panels to reduce both cost and production time. As a postwar marketing gimmick, one American arms merchant dubbed them "Black Widow Lugers."

During the Nazi era, the regular army and Adolf Hitler's elite Waffen SS used the renowned Luger until their defeat in 1945. Mauser continued wartime production in Nazi Germany into December 1943. A Luftwaffe version by Heinrich Krieghoff and Son was augmented staring in 1935. That firm's second-bid contract of 15,000 units ended production in 1944, but the regular army had already received its final 1,000 pistols in November 1943.

Ironically, the German Army refused to accept any more Luger units before war's end, with the last 4,000 assembled in December 1944 being sold as the renamed Model 943 to neutral but right-wing Portugal. Thus, the war's end on May 8, 1945, resulted in the Oberndorf, Germany, factory boasting a large excess of parts stocks.

Just like the British Army restarted the captured Volkswagen factory to produce its German occupation army's staff cars, so also the French empowered Mauser to furnish their infantry and military police with needed sidearms during 1945-1946. The French then relocated German production personnel to metropolitan France, where an estimated 4,000 French Lugers were manufactured.

As late as 1970 the National Police were armed with these captive Lugers. Both Soviet Army MPs and East German People's Police followed suit on their own side of the Berlin Wall.

Bootleg "Lugers" turned up in the postwar United States as well. In 1986, Mauser Luger production at Oberndorf finally ceased four decades after World War II, with units assembled from stock parts on hand still appearing into the 1990s.

The Luger continued to be highly valued as a sidearm even as late as the Vietnam War, with the Vietnamese producing their own knockoffs to arm the Viet Cong and "other irregular forces."

Legends die hard, it seems.

Blaine Taylor wore an American-made .45-caliber Colt Model 1911 pistol as his personal MP sidearm while under enemy fire during the Vietnam War in 1967. He later also test-fired the Beretta 92 SBF at the Connecticut State Police Range after the Beretta's replacement of the Model 1911.

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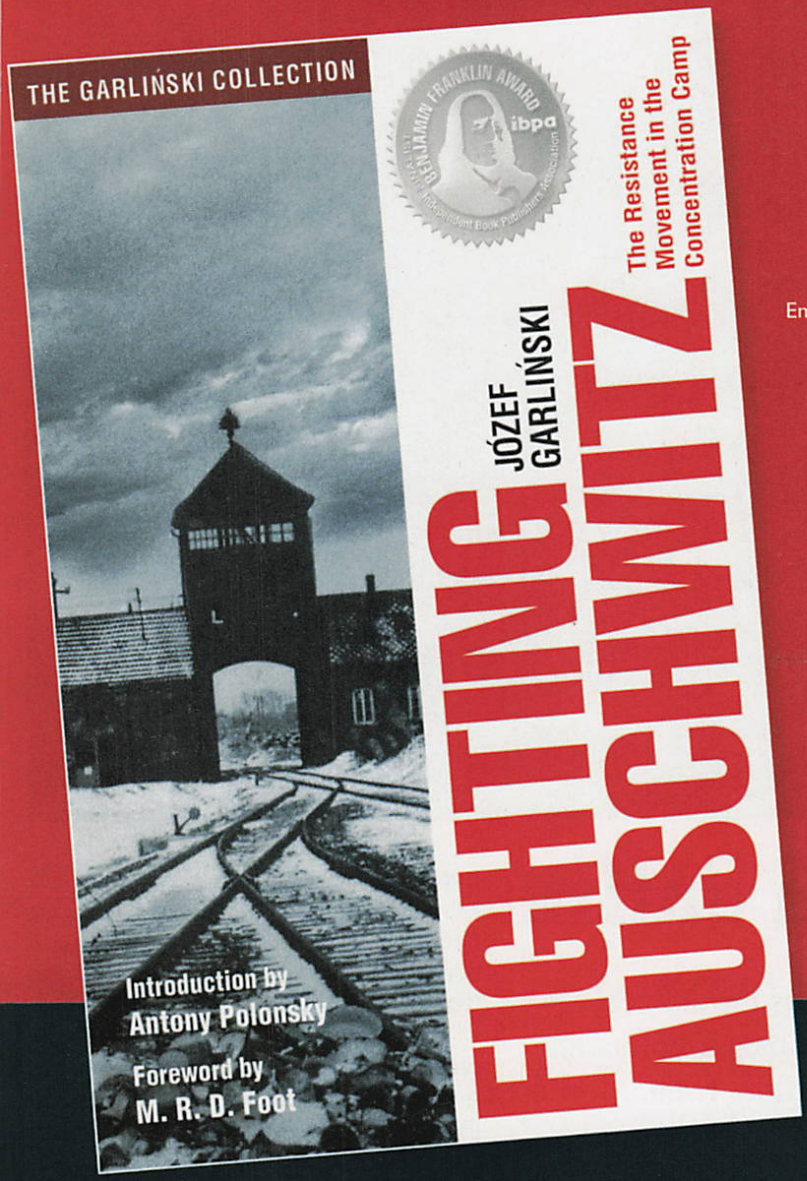

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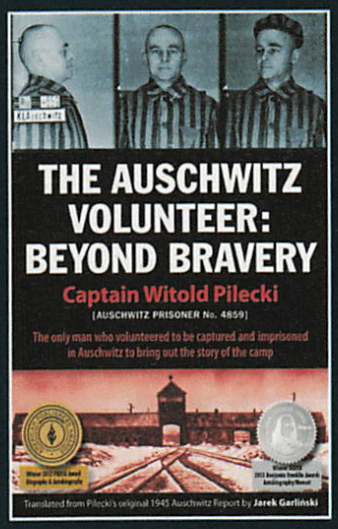

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By Ludwig Heinrich Dyck

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He was "worth an entire division."

German Ace Hans Ulrich Rudel destroyed more than 500 Russian tanks on the Eastern Front.

IN THE VILLAGE OF SEIFERDAU, SOUTHERN PRUSSIA, AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD BOY with an umbrella jumped out of a second-story window. The umbrella turned inside out, the boy landed in a flowerbed and broke his leg. That little boy was Hans Ulrich Rudel, who dreamed of becoming an airman. Rudel's journey to fulfill his dream would not be easy, ultimately earning him the highest decoration of any German serviceman in World War II. Adhering to his maxim, "He is only lost who gives himself up for lost," Rudel faced death untold times.

Son of a Lutheran pastor, Rudel was born on July 2, 1916, in Konradswaldau in Lower Silesia. Not much of an academic achiever, Rudel focused instead on sports. He taught himself to ski at 10, the mountains holding a special place in his heart. With family finances allocated to his sister's medical studies, Rudel gave up his dream of civil air pilot training. He had decided to become a sports instructor when fate intervened with the creation of the Luftwaffe.

Rudel gained admission into the Wildpark-Werder Military School in 1936. Although wanting to become a fighter pilot, Rudel volunteered for the new Stuka diver bomber formations to avoid assignment to the slower bomber command. Rudel's sober, milk-drinking habits ostracized him from the hard-partying pilot culture. Being only an average pilot did not help either. Relegated to aerial photography during Germany's invasion of Poland, Leutnant Rudel nevertheless earned the Iron Cross Second Class. While Stukas blitzed across France, Rudel was training pilots. During the Balkan campaign, Rudel, by then an oberleutnant, was stuck at Reserve Flight in Graz when aerial brilliance came upon him. Rudel's Stuka stayed attached to his wing leader like "an invisible tow rope," hardly ever shot wide at bombing or missed at gunnery. Preconceptions nevertheless followed him to Greece. Forbidden to fly in combat, Rudel listened to the "music of the engines" roaring off to Crete.

Rudel's talents were given a chance after Germany attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. From 3 AM to as late as 10 PM, Rudel was in the air over Belorussia. With sirens screaming, the Ju-87 Bertha Stukas turned Soviet supply columns into "seas of wreckage." Rudel found a kindred spirit in Hauptman Ernst Siegfried Steen of Group III Stuka Geschwader

Stukas over Russia in 1943 and (inset) Rudel in a Stuka cockpit. During the titanic Battle of Kursk, Stuka "Gustavs" blasted tungsten-core shells through Soviet tanks, while Stuka "Doras" knocked out Soviet antiaircraft guns.

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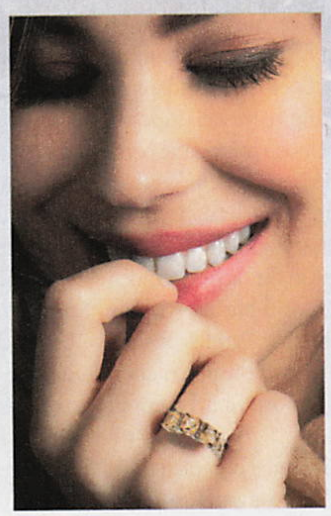

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Imperial War Museum

Rudel's Stuka "Gustav" mounting twin 3.7cm cannons under the wings is prepared for a sortie in Russia. The tank-killer version was even slower and less maneuverable than the dive-bomber version, but Rudel nevertheless achieved impressive results with it.

2, the Immelmann Wing, named after the German World War I ace. Steen affectionately called Rudel that "crazy fellow" because Rudel, who received the Iron Cross First Class on July 18, flew dangerously low for accuracy.

The Immelman Wing next joined the siege of Leningrad where on September 16 the Stukas caught the 23,500-ton Soviet battleship *Marat* in open water. Steen's bomb was a near miss but Rudel's 1,000-pound bomb was dead on. When it was confirmed that the *Marat* survived, Rudel saw red. Braving enemy fighters and the antiaircraft fire of Kronstadt harbor bursting "like the clap of doomsday," Rudel returned to finish off the wounded *Marat* on the September 23. Absorbed with hitting his target, Rudel released his new 2,000-pound bomb at 900 feet, forgetting that its fragmentation effect ranged up to 3,000 feet. Rudel momentarily blacked out, skimming 10 feet above the water. Rear gunner Alfred Scharnovski woke him up: "She is blowing up, sir."

Rudel spent the winter of 1941 in the Rzhev sector. Weakened by lack of winter supplies, frozen petrol, and frostbite, the German soldiers held out against an onslaught of fresh Siberian divisions. Not for the last time, the Stukas defended their airfield from ground attacks. Rudel's holiday present was the German Cross in Gold followed in January 1942 by the Knight's Cross. Temporarily sent to reserve flight at Graz as an instructor, Rudel stopped on the way to get married in his home village.

Rudel's new crews underwent rigorous aerial training, supplemented with morning runs and afternoon swims. Rudel volunteered his trainee Staffel (squadron) to support mountain troops in the Caucasus. Flying over the snow-capped Elbruz Mountains, Rudel was entranced by green meadows and mountain flowers. "For a time I forgot entirely the bombs I am carrying and the objective."

In September 1942 Rudel completed his 500th operational flight. Reaching his 600th in November, Rudel celebrated by consuming copious amounts of cake. Soon after Rudel contracted jaundice. Ignoring a furious doctor, Rudel staggered from the hospital to take command of 1st Staffel of the Immelmann Wing at Stalingrad. By now the wing had been re-equipped with the more powerful Ju-87 Dora. The close-quarter fighting in the city demanded painstaking accuracy to avoid hitting friendly troops. Overexerted and sick, Rudel pushed himself to the limits to ward off the destruction of the 6th Army, feeling "more as if I were in Hades than on earth."

On February 10, 1943, Rudel completed his 1,001st operational flight. Promoted to flight lieutenant, Rudel was sent on holiday leave. After captaining the Luftwaffe team in a ski tournament in Austria, a recharged Rudel went on to test the new twin 3.7cm cannon-armed Ju-87 Gustav Stukas. Even slower and less maneuverable than the bomb-carrying Ju-87, the Gustav nevertheless became an excellent tank buster. Resuming command of 1st Staffel, Rudel integrated the cannon Stukas in the fighting for the Kuban bridgehead. Within a few days Rudel himself destroyed 70 of the small Soviet boats trying to cross the lagoons. His efforts earned Rudel the rank of Hauptmann on April 1 and the Oak Leaves on April 14.

In July 1943 the Stukas unleashed a storm of destruction at the Battle of Kursk. Swooping in at 15 to 30 feet above the ground, Rudel's cannons blasted tungsten-core shells through the thin back armor of enemy tanks. A successful hit entailed flying through an exploding curtain of fire, scorching Rudel's Stuka and riddling it with splinters. By the end of the first day's attack, Rudel's Gustav had destroyed 12 tanks. Other Doras bombarded the deadly Soviet antiaircraft guns or circled to protect against fighters. Despite inflicting heavy casualties on the Soviets, the Germans gained little ground. Worried about Anglo-American landings in Sicily, German leader Adolf Hitler called off what turned out to be Germany's last great offensive in the East.

On July 17 Rudel took over command of Group III Stuka Geschwader 2, helping slow down the Soviet advance that pushed the Germans to the Dnieper River by August. After destroying his 100th tank, Rudel received the Swords to his Knight's Cross at Hitler's Wolf's Lair on November 25.

Rudel's Stukas were transferred north from the southern front to aid the encircled Cherkassy pocket, then back south to north of Odessa. Promoted to major on March 20, 1944, Rudel led an attack against a Dniester bridge. A new pilot lagged behind and, riddled by Soviet Lag-5 fighters, veered off into Soviet territory. Rudel found the crew in a field waving from beside their downed plane. Landing to rescue them, Rudel's own plane got stuck in the mud. Pursued by Soviet infantry, Rudel and his companions ran four miles to the Dniester. Confronted by a steep cliff overlooking the river, the four of them slid downhill through thorny bushes. Their clothes and hands ripped, they caught their breath before diving into the icy, flooded river. Reaching the other side, the crew of the other Stuka collapsed beside Rudel. Hentschel was missing. Rudel, himself exhausted, dove back in. He was too late: "If I had succeeded in catching a hold of Hentschel I should have remained with him in the Dniester."

Rudel and his companions next stumbled upon another party of Russians. Tommy guns pointing at them, his companions surrendered. Dodoging bullets, Rudel made a break for it. Hit in the shoulder, Rudel nearly blacked out. More Russians with horses and dogs came after him. Cresting a hill, he ran down the other side, collapsing in the mud. In the twilight, the pursuers lost of sight of Rudel. He plodded on through pouring rain, running mile after mile, losing all feeling in his feet. Aided by Romanian peasants who shared their meager food,

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Rudel crossed 30 miles of enemy territory in "the hardest race of [his] life." The elation of Rudel's return among the Immelmann Wing was tempered by the news of Hentschel's death.

On March 29, Rudel initially refused the Diamonds to the Knight's Cross because Hitler also insisted that Rudel stop flying. To Rudel's relief, Hitler rescinded his order.

More special awards were to come, along with more attempts to ground Rudel and have him command increasingly fanciful operations. Clad at one meeting as a medieval archer, at another in a toga, the eccentric Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring awarded Rudel with the Golden Pilot's Medal with Diamonds and the Golden Front Service Medal. The latter featured the number of Rudel's 2,000 sorties in diamonds. Göring wanted Rudel to lead a new Messerschmitt 410 squadron to combat Anglo-American bombers. The Reichsmarschall also spoke of an unbelievable 300 panzers ready for an imminent Eastern offensive. Furthermore, worried about Rudel's safety, Göring relayed Hitler's forbiddance of Rudel rescuing any more downed crews.

Even as the Soviets pressed closer to the German homeland, Rudel experienced the awesome might of the U.S. Air Force. Large numbers of American fighters hunted for prey after escorting bomber formations. Rudel remembered several hundred Mustangs pouncing on his 19 Stukas. For the first and only time, Rudel abandoned the mission but managed to bring his squadron home without loss.

The Soviets encroached upon East Prussia, where Rudel disobeyed orders and rescued another crew. In recognition of Rudel's defense of the Latvian Courland pocket, Field Marshall Ferdinand Schoerner sent cakes decorated with the number of Rudel's destroyed tanks. In heavy fog, Rudel's Stuka suddenly buzzed right over a massive Soviet penetration. Rudel twisted crazily to avoid the metal screaming past him from antiaircraft and machine-gun fire. Rear gunner Ernst Gaderman yelled; "Engine on fire!" Oil and flames obscured the cockpit. Rudel crash-landed in a forest. Gaderman, a doctor, suffered three broken ribs but managed to remove a piece of metal skewering Rudel's thigh. Despite his injuries, including a concussion, Rudel returned with his squadron to lay waste to the Soviet column.

Flying back to Romania, Rudel discovered that his allies had changed sides when Romanian anti-aircraft fire opened up on the Stukas. Rudel threatened to bomb the staff headquarters of Romanian Air Force Commodore Emanoil Ionescu, who promptly allowed the Stukas to continue using the airfield. Assuming

Imperial War Museum

Rudel demonstrates the preferred method for knocking out an enemy tank by firing through its thin back armor. Despite many close brushes with death, the Stuka ace survived the war.

command of the Immelmann Wing, Rudel defended the German Army's retreat out of Romania into Hungary. He alternated between flying the Ju-87s or the new, faster ground attack FW-190Fs. In September 1944, Rudel returned to inspect a new type of Soviet tank destroyed in an earlier battle. Survivors hidden in the wreckage opened up on the Stuka with their antiaircraft gun, puncturing Rudel's leg. Passing out after landing at Budapest, Rudel woke up in the hospital with an extracted bullet and a plaster cast.

Cutting short his six-week recovery to eight days, Rudel joined the battle for Budapest. Summoned to Germany again, Rudel met not only a beaming Göring but Hitler alongside most of the high command. Awarded with the unique Golden Oak-leaves with Swords and Diamonds to Knights' Cross on January 1, 1945, Rudel was promoted to colonel but was again ordered to stay grounded. Again Rudel refused to accept the decoration if it meant he could no longer flying. Hitler's faced darkened then changed to a smile, "All right, you may go on flying." Returning to Budapest, Rudel earned the Hungarian Medal for Bravery from the Hungarian leader Ferenc Szalasi.

Ignoring more orders to discontinue flying and disciplinary threats, Rudel helped Schoerner build up a new front in Silesia, and he also assisted Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler in defending Pomerania and Frankfurt on the Oder. Rudel destroyed 12 of 13 tanks a mere 50 miles from Berlin. With one cannon jammed and a single round remaining in the other, Rudel went for the remaining Stalin tank which "burst into a blaze" when "something seared through" Rudel's "leg like a strip of red hot steel." Rudel again passed out after landing his flaming Stuka.

Rudel awoke on an operating table at Seelow, one of his legs in plaster, his other leg amputated. Rudel consoled himself with memories of comrades who had paid the ultimate price. Deluged with flowers and presents from an adoring public, Rudel barely recovered in Berlin's Zoo bunker before returning to fly in April. His mechanics rigged up a projection to control the rudder bar with his stump but the rubbing re-opened the wound, splattering the engine in blood.

By now even Rudel questioned the sanity of his high command. Holding out for an armistice with the Western Allies, Rudel frankly told Hitler that "the war can no longer be ended victoriously on both fronts." Rudel kept flying until May 8, 1945 when he received the news that the war was over. He was to surrender unconditionally to the Russians. Considering a suicide attack, Rudel was dissuaded by his men. Addressing his Immelmann Wing, Rudel praised the men's bravery and loyalty.

Anticipating a chivalrous reception, Rudel crash-landed at an American aerodrome at Kitzingen during parade formation. Rudel was greeted by a soldier pointing his gun and demanding Rudel's Oak Leaves. Rudel "shoved him back and shut down the hood again." Rudel remained undaunted in captivity. He denied knowledge of death camps, retorted with accusations of women and children massacred by Allied bombers, and told the Americans to look for further atrocities among their Soviet allies. Deemed a "typical Nazi officer" by his interrogator, Rudel was interned at U.S. Army bases and prisoner of war camps in Germany and France. Transferred to a German hospital Rudel obtained his release in 1946.

Sick of a Germany that blamed the ills of World War II on its soldiers, Rudel moved to Argentina in 1948. He worked for Argentina's airplane industry and helped build the air force of President Juan Peron. But his real passions continued to be sports and mountain climbing, and he did not let his prosthetic leg deter him. Rudel competed in skiing and tennis and nearly climbed the summit of Aconcagua, the highest peak in the Americas in 1951. During 1953-1954, Rudel joined fellow veterans on the Argentina-Chile border in ascending the formidable 22,441-foot Llullaillaco. Rudel's mountaineering adventures are recounted in his book, *From the Stukas to the Andes.*

Continued on page 77

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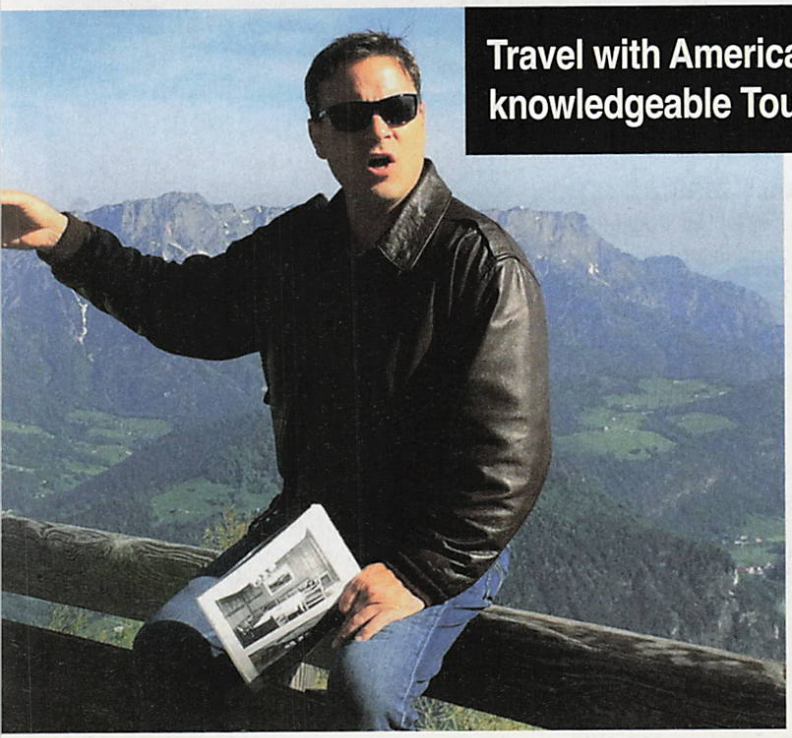

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Viking Hero of the OSS

Actor Sterling Hayden served with distinction as a clandestine operative during World War II.

SEVERAL HOLLYWOOD STARS SERVED PROUDLY IN THE U.S. MARINE CORPS during World War II, including Tyrone Power, Louis Hayward, Lee Marvin, Macdonald Carey, Hugh O'Brian, Bill Lundigan, John Russell, Robert Ryan, Brian Keith, and Peter Ortiz.

Power flew C-46 Curtiss Commando transport planes in the Pacific Theater, Hayward was a combat cameraman who filmed the bloody battle of Tarawa, Marvin was wounded on Saipan, Carey was an ordnance officer at Bougainville, Lundigan survived the bitter fighting on Peleliu, and Keith was a rear gunner on Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers flying missions against Rabaul and other Japanese bases in the Southwest Pacific.

And then there was Sterling Hayden, a restless adventurer who served in the Marines before being seconded to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), with which he served with distinction in the Balkans, France, Belgium, and Germany. One of the unsung heroes of the undercover war, he was awarded the Silver Star for displaying "great courage" in the Mediterranean Theater. Hayden had a lifelong love affair with the sea, and his boat was fittingly christened *Wanderer*.

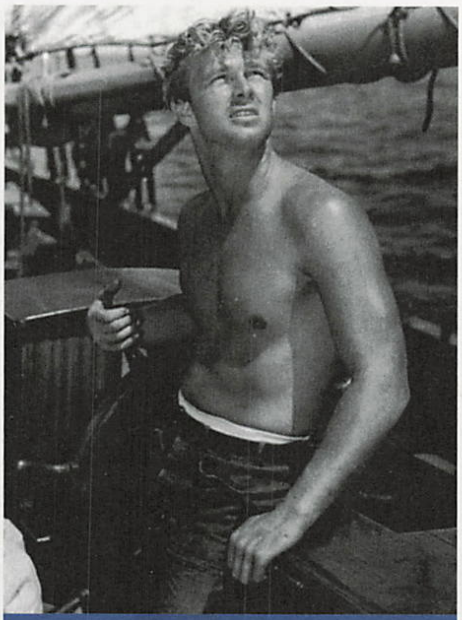
Born on Sunday, March 26, 1916, in a quiet neighborhood of Upper Montclair, New Jersey, Sterling was a mischievous lad. After taking aim at a neighbor's wife with a slingshot one day, he was beaten with a wet stick by his angry father. When the boy screamed his father collapsed from an apparent stroke, and died three months later. Sterling mourned for a long time.

His mother Frances landed a job with *Good Housekeeping* magazine, cared for her son, and then married divorcee James W. Hayden. The family trekked around during the Great Depression, stealing away from boarding houses and resort cottages under cover of darkness with bills unpaid. The disillusioned boy was sent to the Friends School in Washington, D.C. He hated it and quit after the 10th grade.

Later, the three Haydens rode a bus to Boston and settled in a rooming house on the outskirts. Sterling trudged five miles to the city's business district in search of an office job, but there were none available, so he wandered off to the docks in search of an opening as an ordinary seaman.

Wandering the Boston wharves, he stopped to gaze in the window of a nautical instruments store. The shopkeeper told the youth that a big schooner, the *Puritan*, was hiring crewmen for a cruise from New London, Connecticut, to San Pedro, California. The captain signed on Sterling as ship's boy at $10 a month, and he eagerly went to sea for the first time.

A natural sailor who quickly learned all facets of seamanship, Sterling worked aboard trawlers and schooners along the East Coast.



ABOVE: A young Sterling Hayden posed for this photograph aboard a small boat. The actor and intelligence operative was an accomplished sailor. TOP: Actor Sterling Hayden, a veteran of the intelligence service during World War II, starred as Major Steve Pitt in the 1953 feature film *Fighter Attack*.

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TOP: Working for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Hayden was involved in supplying Yugoslav partisans with support. In this photo partisans board a schooner for their voyage across the Adriatic Sea from Italy. LEFT: Pictured with other Marine recruits during basic training, Hayden wanted to keep his acting success as quiet as possible when he entered the military. RIGHT: Marshal Josip Broz Tito led the Yugoslav communist partisan effort against the Nazis, while Hayden was active in providing support to his forces.

By 1936, he qualified as first mate aboard the schooner *Yankee* and made his first round-the-world voyage. He sailed in schooner races, filled in as a navigator, and showed courage during a competition in October 1938 by crawling along a spar in a howling gale to secure a torn main gaff. By now a muscular, 6-foot-5-inch-tall "Viking" with sun-bleached hair, Sterling became well known to reporters as he sailed in and out of New England harbors. The *Boston Post* described him as a "movie idol."

At the age of 22, the ambitious Sterling achieved his dream and was given command of his first ship. He was hired to sail the Ceylon brigantine *Florence C. Robinson* from Gloucester to Tahiti. With a sturdy crew of 11, the vessel departed in November 1938 and braved fierce storms before reaching the balmy island paradise in February 1939. During an idyllic six-month layover in Tahiti, Sterling became engaged to a 19-year-old native beauty, but there was no wedding, because he felt that he could not make her happy. He had decided to buy the steel schooner *Aldebaran* and start a packet service between Tahiti and Hawaii.

The vessel, which had been Kaiser Wilhelm II's yacht, was laid up in Panama, and Sterling needed to sail her to Boston for inspection by the Coast Guard. But his plan went awry when a storm off Cape Hatteras swamped the *Aldebaran*. She had to be towed to Charleston, South Carolina, after a Coast Guard cutter rescued the crew. This left Sterling broke.

But he still wanted his own ship, so the ruggedly handsome sailor accepted some modeling assignments before one of his crewmen and an Associated Press newsman convinced him to try his luck in motion pictures. An agent was contacted, Hayden signed with Paramount Pictures at $600 a month, and he and his mother moved to Hollywood.

Groomed for stardom, Hayden received acting lessons and was given the full studio treatment. His response was the same one he had registered in school: he hated it. He was sent on "ridiculous" publicity tours, but was happy to chat with President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House when he gave a reception for Hollywood stars that had supported the 1941 March of Dimes campaign.

Hayden's first film was the now forgotten *Virginia,* released in 1941, in which he supported Fred MacMurray and Madeleine Carroll. The former mariner struggled to develop acting skills, and his second screen appearance was in *Bahama Passage,* also released that year and unremembered. Hayden again played opposite the graceful English-born Carroll, star of such earlier classics as *The 39 Steps, The General Died at Dawn,* and *Lloyds of London*, and he was smitten with her.

Hayden and Carroll were both cynical about Hollywood. She talked of getting involved in the war, which now embroiled her homeland, and Hayden wanted to regain his self-respect by doing something worthwhile. In November 1941, after leaving Paramount on good terms, he contacted Colonel William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan, the U.S. coordinator of intelligence and soon to be first director of the OSS. Donovan quickly arranged for the actor to go to Britain and be trained for undercover operations.

After a perilous crossing in an Atlantic convoy, Hayden reported to the London office. His arrival was unexpected and caused confusion, but he was processed within a few days and sent to Scotland. There, he underwent commando training with the famed Argyll and Sutherland Highland Regiment, but parachute training almost put an end to his new military career when he jumped out of a Royal Air Force four-engine Short Stirling bomber in March 1942. He landed in a quarry and broke his ankle, tore cartilage in his knee, and injured his backbone.

After medical treatment, Hayden was sent back to the United States, where he soon mar-

ried Carroll in a New Hampshire ski lodge. The actress left Hollywood, joined the American Red Cross, and was sent to Europe. She later served in Italy and France.

Hayden believed that his seagoing skills would ensure him a place in the Navy, so he requested a lieutenancy and command of a PT boat, but he did not even have a high school diploma, so the Navy offered him only the rank of ensign and no guarantee of a motor torpedo boat assignment. Gamely swallowing his disappointment, Hayden enlisted in the Marine Corps on October 26, 1942.

Sent to the recruit depot at Parris Island, South Carolina, the free spirit who felt at home only on the open sea found the rigorous basic training a rude awakening, but he soon learned the ropes and became a "hell of a good Marine," according to his drill instructor, Private George S. Featherstone. Hayden spent three weeks as a drill instructor himself before being chosen to go to Officer Candidate School. He was assigned to the 23rd officer candidate class at the command school in Quantico, Virginia, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve in April 1943.

Though Hayden showed great promise as a Marine subaltern, he had no patience with the discipline and did not like being recognized as a former actor. He wanted to be seen as just another leatherneck. His wife no longer wanted to be associated with Hollywood, so the pair went to court to have their surname changed to Hamilton. Hayden also changed his Christian name, and by late June 1943 he was legally John Hamilton.

He was meanwhile trying to leave the Marine Corps and again contacted Colonel Donovan, requesting a transfer to the OSS. Busily engaged in getting the new agency organized, Donovan was receptive, so when the Quantico class members received their marching orders in the summer of 1943, most were assigned to the Pacific Theater, while Hayden and two others were sent to the OSS headquarters in Washington. From there, Hayden was sent to the OSS office in Cairo.

OSS Cairo had no idea they were getting a new man and were at first unsure how to use the eager new operative. After a few months, they finally assigned Hayden to the seaport of Bari on the southeastern coast of Italy to organize support for Marshal Josip Broz Tito's undercover partisans battling German forces in Yugoslavia. Operating from hidden bases in the country's rugged mountain ranges, the communist guerrillas were effectively sabotaging enemy installations and communications. Hayden was to establish a support base in the port

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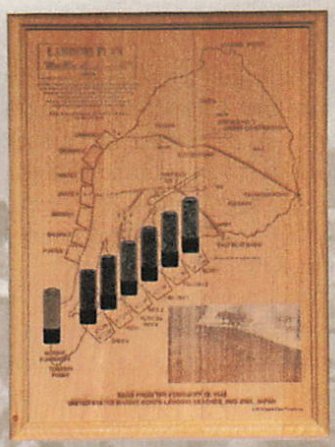

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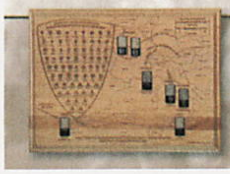

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of Monopoli, a few miles south of Bari, with the assistance of agents from the British Special Operations Executive (SOE).

The assignment was tailor-made for the American seafarer. He took command of a fleet of 14 schooners, two brigantines, and six ketches manned by 400 male and female Yugoslav partisans. Their task was to ferry needed weapons, equipment, and other supplies across the Adriatic Sea to Marshal Tito's guerrillas.

The brief but perilous operations began on December 24, 1943, and continued through January 2, 1944. After stealthily breaching the German blockade around southeastern Italy, the boats headed for the little partisan-held island of Vis, off the coast of Croatia. Under cover of darkness, Hayden and his sailors hastily unloaded the supplies. Fishing boats picked up the matériel, made their way to the mainland, and offloaded between German-held beaches. Mule trains then carried the supplies up the mountains to Tito's patriots.

Cheerfully resolute and resourceful, Hayden gained much respect as a commanding officer from the partisan sailors and his SOE comrades. He was awarded the Silver Star for displaying "great courage in making hazardous sea voyages in enemy-infested waters and reconnaissance trips through enemy-held areas."

Hayden grew to admire the tough Yugoslav partisans. They inspired him, and he considered them more dedicated than anyone he had known, as he stated in long letters to friends back home. The experience influenced his future decision to join the American Communist Party.

Later in 1944, Hayden served with the OSS behind enemy lines in Greece and Yugoslavia. During that summer, he parachuted into Yugoslavia with Marine Gunnery Sergeant John Harnicker and a Navy radio operator. Working with the partisans, they led several downed Allied fliers to safety in Italy.

After completing his duties in the Balkans, Hayden returned home for a well-earned 30-day leave. Madeleine Carroll was then busy at Army hospitals in Naples and Foggia, tending victims of the costly Monte Cassino and Anzio campaigns. She also worked aboard hospital trains carrying wounded soldiers to France. In recognition of her wartime service, she was awarded the French Legion of Honor and the American Medal of Freedom.

After his respite, Hayden was assigned late in 1944 to join an OSS team in Germany. When he arrived in Paris, though, he was ordered to head to Belgium and join up with Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges' U.S. First Army, which fought in the bitter Ardennes campaign and also became the first Allied army to cross the German border. Leading six German-speaking technical sergeants, Hayden followed the advance of Hodges' troops from Cologne to Marburg in a search for anti-Nazis to be recruited by the OSS. The mission was mostly fruitless. Hayden was promoted to captain in February 1945, and he spent the following summer assessing Allied bomb damage at ports in Germany, Norway, and Denmark.

One of Hayden's most memorable roles was as General Jack D. Ripper in the Stanley Kubrick film *Dr. Strangelove*. In this promotional photo he is shown with co-star Peter Sellers.

Hayden and his wife were reunited in Paris in September 1945, agreed amicably to separate, and were divorced later that year in Reno, Nevada. Captain Hayden was discharged from active duty on December 24, 1945. Besides the Silver Star and two campaign ribbons, his decorations included three Bronze Stars, two Bronze Arrowheads, a letter of commendation, and the Yugoslav Order of Merit. He remained in the Marine Corps Reserve until 1948.

Returning to Hollywood, Hayden was warmly greeted and signed by Paramount Studios. Still affected by his wartime partisan friends, he joined other film actors in the American Communist Party in 1946. He attended a few meetings, became disillusioned with the dogma, and dropped his membership after six months. The affiliation would come back to haunt him later.

Hayden began his postwar film career with small parts in 1947 releases: *Variety Girl,* a nondescript Paramount musical, and John Farrow's *Blaze of Noon,* a drama about air mail pilots starring William Holden and Anne Baxter. This was followed in 1949 by *El Paso,* a modest but worthwhile Western featuring John Payne and Gail Russell. Though Hayden lacked depth as an actor and became typecast as hard-bitten characters, he matured and projected believability and authority in a number of roles.

He first gained stardom and critical acclaim in *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), John Huston's powerful gangster classic costarring Louis Calhern, Jean Hagen, James Whitmore, and Marilyn Monroe. After several low-budget Westerns, Hayden then portrayed a no-nonsense aircraft carrier skipper in *Flat Top* (1950) and the protector of saloon owner Joan Crawford in Nicholas Ray's psychological Western, *Johnny Guitar* (1954).

While gaining stature on the screen, Hayden tarnished his image by cooperating with the House Un-American Activities Committee during the Red Scare of the early 1950s. He admitted his brief Communist Party affiliation and named several Hollywood figures as fellow travelers. He quickly regretted it and soon backed moves to abolish the HUAC, but he was scarred for the rest of his life.

In 1955, Hayden portrayed two historical figures on the screen. He was frontiersman Jim Bowie in *The Last Command,* an elaborate and sweeping depiction of the last stand at the Alamo. Then, in *The Eternal Sea,* he played carrier pilot John M. Hoskins, who lost a leg in the sinking of the USS *Princeton* in October 1944, fought to remain in the service, and became a

Korean War vice admiral. After appearing in some more Westerns and gangster films, Hayden brilliantly played crazy General Jack D. Ripper in Stanley Kubrick's black comedy, *Dr. Strangelove* (1964). His last memorable Hollywood role—brief but outstanding—was as a dishonest police captain in *The Godfather* (1972).

Despite critical acclaim and a number of strong screen performances, Hayden's talent was not fully tapped and his career was marked by too many undemanding roles. He always harbored mixed feelings about his work, loathed the shallow hype of Hollywood, and periodically returned to the sea. The actor's private life was turbulent. He cared little for money and spent almost everything he earned. His second marriage to Betty Ann De Noon lasted eight years and produced four children, but ended in May 1957.

Hayden won custody of the children but was ordered by a court not to leave Los Angeles with them. He defied the ruling, scraped together as much money as he could, and made plans to take the children to Tahiti. Mustering a crew of 11 friends who manned his schooner *Wanderer* for no pay, the restless actor and children set sail on January 20, 1959. After a stormy cruise, the vessel dropped anchor in Tahiti on March 4.

The voyagers spent almost a year on the island. Hayden started writing an autobiography while the children were tutored by one of his crewmen. Eventually, Hayden decided to return to California, where his children could receive formal schooling. He hustled up the needed cash, and *Wanderer* returned to the West Coast. For contempt of court, Hayden was slapped with a $500 fine and suspended five-day jail sentence.

The actor married Catherine D. McConnell in 1960, had two more children, and published his autobiography, *Wanderer,* in 1963. Meanwhile, he played in more films, some entertaining and some mediocre, and gave fine performances in several television productions. His last screen appearance was in *Venom,* an unexceptional British picture, in 1982.

The following year, Hayden was the subject of a documentary film, *Lighthouse of Chaos.* He died of prostate cancer at the age of 70 in 1986, and his ashes were scattered over San Francisco Bay by his widow, children, and friends.

Author Michael D. Hull wrote frequently for WWII History *on a variety of topics from his home in Enfield, Connecticut. He passed away in 2019.*

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By Jon Diamond

An Uneasy Alliance

Though British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Premiere Josef Stalian were suspicious of one another, they were compelled to cooperate early in World War II.

IN THE *GRAND ALLIANCE* VOLUME OF WINSTON S. CHURCHILL'S MEMOIRS OF World War II, the British prime minister lambasted Soviet Premier Josef Stalin and his inept government for failing to anticipate Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, which began on June 22, 1941.

Churchill wrote, "We must now lay bare the error and vanity of cold-blooded calculation of the Soviet government and enormous Communist machine, and their amazing ignorance about where they stood themselves. They had shown a total indifference to the fate of the Western powers.... War is mainly a catalogue of blunders, but it may be doubted whether any mistake in history has equaled that of Stalin and the Communist chiefs.... But so far as strategy, policy, foresight, and competence are arbiters, Stalin and his commissars showed themselves at this moment the most completely outwitted bunglers of the Second World War." Privately, Churchill later described Stalin and his Kremlin minions as "simpletons."

Churchill was always highly critical of the Bolsheviks. In fact, contemporaneous with the Paris Peace Conference in June 1919, Churchill, then the secretary of state for war and air in Prime Minister Lloyd George's coalition government, was trying desperately to convince his fellow cabinet ministers to allow General Edmund Ironside's strongly reinforced troops in northern Russia to take the offensive against the Bolsheviks.

Outspoken against Lenin since he had first assumed the war minister post six months previously, Churchill was unshaken in his belief that the Bolshevik regime had betrayed the Allies by making a separate peace with Kaiser Wilhelm II at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. The short-term result of this agreement was to free up numerous German troops for transfer to the Western Front to immediately commence General Erich Ludendorff's offensive called the Kaiserschlacht, or the emperor's battle. In fact, from November 30, 1917, to March 21, 1918, a period of less than four months, a total of 34 German divisions had been transferred from the Eastern Front and Romania for the offensive, almost breaking the Anglo-French alliance militarily in the process. Now, well after hostilities had concluded, Churchill was arguing for a complete regime change in post-revolutionary Russia. At this time, Churchill was referring to Lenin's revolution as "the plague bacillus of Bolshevism," which was capable of destroying civilization.

Ever the politician, Churchill suffered some consequences in regard to his hawkish stance against the Soviet government immediately after World War I. First, it created friction within the Liberal Party. Second, the Liberal Prime Minister Lloyd George, whose postwar government was a coalition, was exasperated by his war minister, who was now clamoring for more combat after the four-year cataclysm that had just ended. His war-weary constituency sorely wanted peace after the carnage and bloodletting had ceased in November 1918.

Despite having one of the most extensive intelligence networks in the world at the time, he was caught completely unaware by the start of the Nazi invasion on June 22, 1941. In fact, six days after the Nazi onslaught, Stalin stated to a small group of his associates, "Lenin left us a great legacy, but we, his heirs, have f**d it up." This was Stalin's closest attempt to claim responsibility for his military's unpreparedness. This inexplicable lapse in Stalin's cunning

German troops are pictured on the move during Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union that began on June 22, 1941. Operation Barbarossa brought Great Britain and the Soviet Union together as unlikely and wary Allies.

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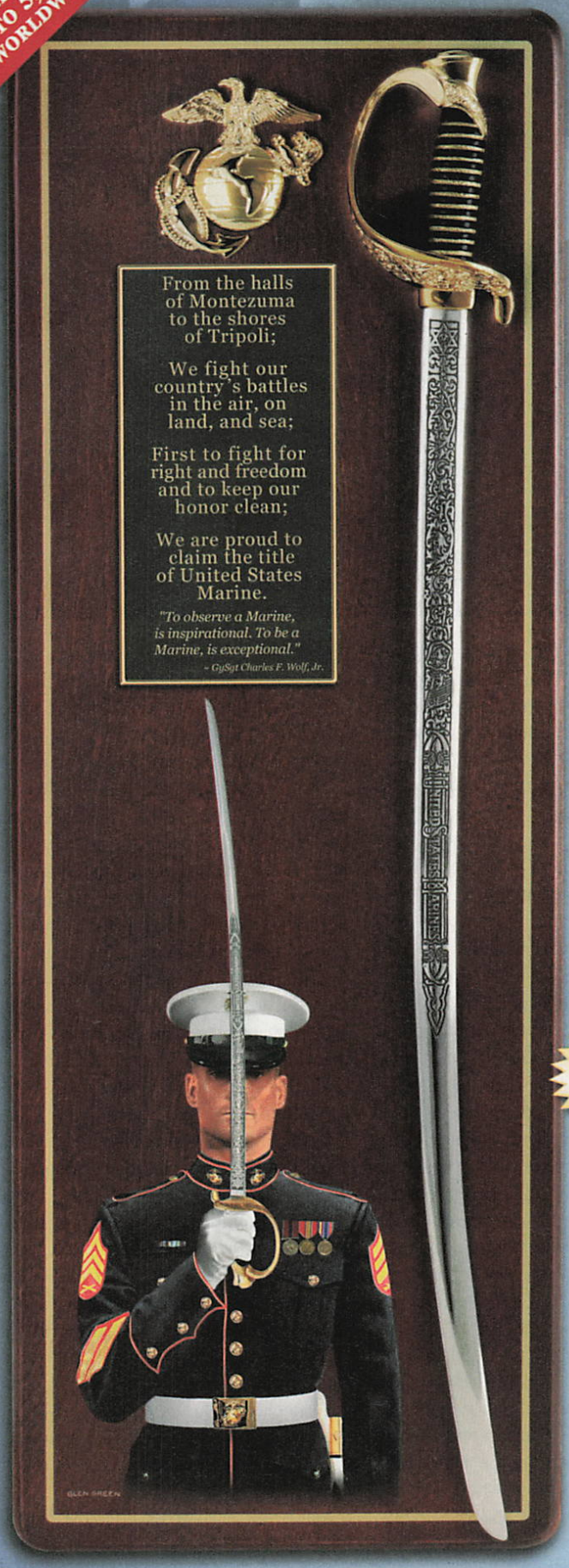

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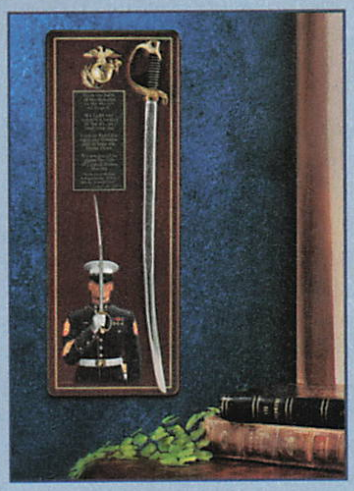

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and paranoid personality was coupled with his own self-imposed losses in Red Army officers as a result of his almost ceaseless purges during the late 1930s. Approximately 35,000 officers, disproportionately from the higher ranks, were expelled from the Army or arrested with only a small fraction being reinstated after careful "investigation."

In sharp contrast, Churchill had an almost Cassandra-like ability to accurately predict the next move of his enemy (i.e., Hitler) throughout the decade of appeasement during the 1930s. In fact, British intelligence had warned of Hitler's imminent invasion weeks before it occurred, and Churchill had echoed these predictions even earlier to Stalin on April 3, 1941, via Sir Stafford Cripps, the British ambassador to Moscow. Stalin remained skeptical about the veracity of Churchill's message, which was the only message before the German attack that the British prime minister had sent Stalin directly.

Churchill was dismayed that his warning was largely ignored and felt that Stalin had lost a large portion of his air force on the ground as a result of his incredulity. Churchill noted that the chiefs of staff warned on May 31, 1941, "We have firm indications that the Germans are now concentrating large army and air forces against Russia. Under this threat, they will probably demand concessions most injurious to them. If the Russians refuse, the Germans will march." On June 12, the Joint Intelligence Committee reported, "Fresh evidence is now at hand that Hitler has made up his mind to have done with Soviet obstruction, and to attack."

Why did Stalin doubt the intelligence about Hitler's militaristic intentions from British channels? Prior to the Nazi juggernaut into Russia, Stalin was deeply concerned that Britain would search for a peace treaty with Hitler. This became especially more likely after General Archibald Wavell's failed Greek expedition in the spring of 1941 and General Erwin Rommel's incredible victories throughout Cyrenaica after the Italian defeat there. It seems that Cripps alerted Stalin and his henchmen on April 18, 1941, about a scenario for such an impending truce negotiation: "It was not outside the bounds of possibility, if the war were protracted for a long period, that there might be a temptation for Great Britain to come to some arrangement to end the war on the sort of basis which has recently been suggested in certain German quarters."

Such defeatist talk by Cripps was occurring contemporaneously with Churchill trying to coax Stalin to form a "Balkan front" against Hitler through a Soviet alliance with Yugoslavia and Greece. Cripps' discussion with the Soviet leadership, then, only heightened Stalin's fears of another episode of "perfidious Albion." When Churchill tried to warn Stalin again on April 21, 1941, of the probability of a German attack on the USSR, the Soviet leader's paranoia only escalated, leading him to complain to his general staff, "Look at that, we are being threatened with the Germans, and the Germans with the Soviet Union, and they [the British] are playing us off against one another. It is a subtle political game."

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (left) and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin distrusted one another, but out of necessity they cooperated. Prior to World War II, Churchill had been a harsh critic of the communist Soviet state, while Stalin remembered British participation in efforts to destabilize the regime in Moscow.

Stalin concluded that Churchill was only attempting to lure the Soviets into a war with Germany. Based on this level of mistrust, it is no wonder that Stalin ignored Churchill's warnings and maintained a deep-seated paranoia toward the British prime minister after Operation Barbarossa commenced. As late as June 14, 1941, the Soviet news agency Tass denounced the British for spreading rumors of an imminent outbreak of hostilities between the Russians and Germany. Sir Alexander Cadogan, the permanent undersecretary at the Foreign Office, though, passed on precise and detailed evidence of the likely invasion threat to Ivan Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London, and the latter relayed these reports to Moscow.

Unlike Churchill, who assumed the mantle of leadership with vigor and defiance during the dark days of the Norwegian and French evacuations, as well as during the subsequent Battle of Britain, Stalin was in a state of shock after the Nazi juggernaut got underway. During the first several days of Hitler's offensive, Stalin left the government and military without clear central direction as he sank into a brief depression. The Soviet leader knew that he had committed an enormous diplomatic miscalculation. He now knew that he had misread Hitler, and that this mistake was his own fault.

This was a time when Churchill was making his first overtures toward alliance with the Soviet dictator, who actually feared a revolt by his own commissars during the initial days of the German invasion. When the first British diplomats began arriving in Moscow, they found in Stalin "an irritable despot under intense strain." With the passage of a few months, however, both American and British leaders characterized him as "brilliant of mind, quick of thought and repartee, a ruthless, great leader." General Alan Brooke, British chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), found in Stalin "a military brain of the highest caliber." Thus, Churchill was to acquire quite an adversary for an ally.

For Churchill, the ideological differences between himself and Stalin were temporarily ignored as the practicality of an alliance became manifestly necessary for Britain to survive. From an opportunistic standpoint, Britain had everything to benefit and almost nothing to lose from an alliance with Stalin. After all, Churchill had proclaimed in his June 22, 1941, speech that the invasion of Russia "is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of the British Isles."

Operation Barbarossa offered Churchill an immediate ally, which might consume the German tide and minimize pressure on Wavell's

forces in the Middle East and keep the Suez Canal and the Iraqi oil fields in Britain's control. First, some have argued that military expediency and a need for relief from a full-fledged Nazi pincer move through North Africa and the Balkans are what hastened Churchill to offer his full support to the Russian people, and thus (indirectly), Stalin's regime. Second, with no major victories on the Continent in sight and retreat in North Africa, it was questionable if Churchill could maintain his coalition in the House of Commons and keep the support of the British public.

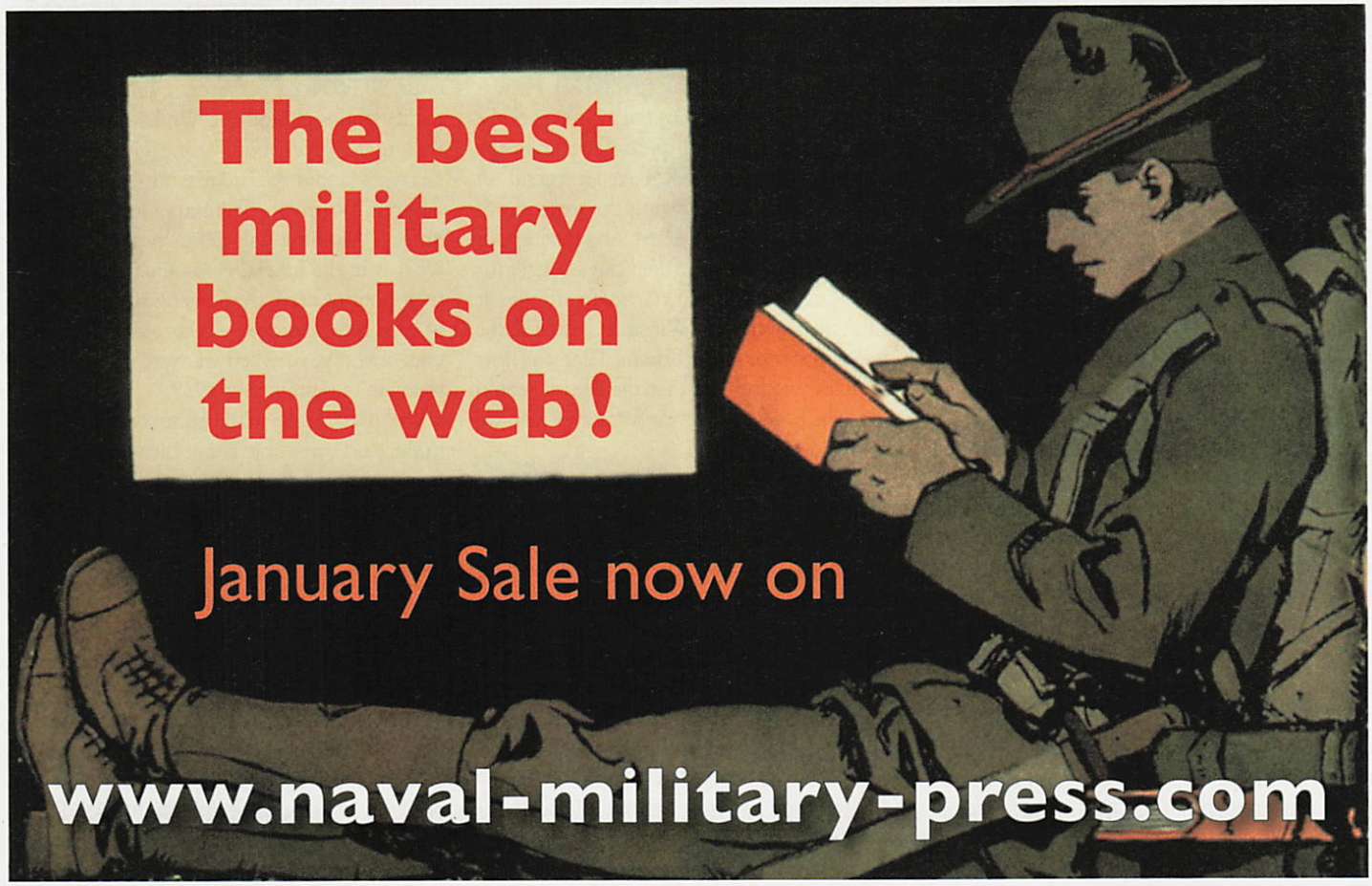
With Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, the Wehrmacht would now be confronted in a "giant clash of arms ... on the broad plains of western Russia," which would supplant Britain's mostly feeble attempt up until then. Churchill's conundrum was whether an ardent anti-Bolshevik should leap to Stalin's aid. As a student of history, the prime minister knew that Operation Barbarossa would be to Hitler what the Russian invasion of 1812 was to Napoleon: a huge military blunder.

Also, Churchill possessed a large degree of emotion and humanity in this decision, stating, "The Russian danger is our danger and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe." Although capable of being Machiavellian, Churchill was making a sharp contradistinction between "the Russian people and the Soviet regime."

Stalin, however, would not be grateful, and this perpetually irked Churchill. John Colville, Churchill's private secretary, spoke with the

Imperial War Museum

Soviet Premier Josef Stalin demanded the opening of a second front in Western Europe to relieve the pressure on his armed forces on the Eastern Front. Prior to 1944, the best the British could offer were Commando and bombing raids against German targets in the West. In this photo, Royal Air Force bombers attack the German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* at the French port of Brest in December 1941.



prime minister on the day of the Russian invasion, and he asked "whether for him, the arch anti-Communist, this was not bowing down to the House of Rimmon. Mr. Churchill replied, 'Not at all. I have only one purpose, the destruction of Hitler, and my life is much simplified thereby. If Hitler invaded Hell, I would make at least a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons.'"

Britain was in no position to conduct a second front in Western Europe. Thus, Churchill resorted to a diplomatic ploy in which Britain would make no separate peace with Hitler. After all, Stalin was still paranoid about the nature of Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess's flight to Britain in May 1941. The other offer that Churchill placed on the table was a share in Britain's own Lend-Lease aid. Stalin wanted a variety of Lend-Lease goods from Britain that the United States was only just beginning to deliver to His Majesty's government.

Churchill, who appreciated the shortfalls in his own country from both ill-preparedness and the frequent military defeats and evacuations, was compelled to comply with Stalin's requests via a land route through Iran and an arduous and dangerous Arctic sea voyage to Murmansk and Archangel south of the Barents Sea. Stalin's other demand, which was echoed by the newly awakened and increasingly vocal Communist Party in Great Britain, was for a second front against Germany to blunt the strength of the attack against the Soviets.

Churchill, who was always game to conduct a military adventure, initially considered mounting such an operation; however, his more conservative and pragmatic military chiefs on the Imperial General Staff quickly dissuaded him from such an enterprise. Ultimately, Churchill had to settle for a limited bomber offensive, which in 1941 was incapable of disrupting Nazi industry, Hitler's strategy, or the continued commitment of the German home front to the overall war effort.

Churchill committed himself to the support of Russia without thinking of the long-term consequences. The rationale for this decision was largely based on his total immersion in the short-term aim of defeating Hitler and his lack of expectations of any long-term consequences. Churchill's willingness extended to lending aid and supporting the Russian people in defense of their homeland. Hitler, in one of his more memorable follies, had driven Stalin into Churchill's arms. Stalin's paranoia was nonetheless fully evident, as he believed that the British (and Americans) would not render any meaningful support to his regime until "they think we are out of breath and are ready for an armistice with Germany."

Bundesarchiv Bild Bild 146-1992-055-33; Photo: Mährlen

A German soldier sits in a foxhole outside Moscow and attempts to shield himself from the cold. As Churchill expected, the German advance on Moscow was stopped just a few miles short of the Soviet capital city in the winter of 1941-42 as harsh weather and stiffening Red Army resistance took their toll.

Immediately after the invasion of the Soviet Union, Stalin's ambassador in London, Ivan Maisky, met with the politician Lord Beaverbrook to discuss the possibility of a second front. According to Maisky's war memoirs published after the conflict, "Beaverbrook's attempt to interest the Cabinet in the question of a second front was unsuccessful. Churchill, as I had supposed, was unfavorable to this idea. He was supported by a majority of the members of the cabinet.... It becomes quite clear that the motive of aid to the USSR played a second- or third-rate part in organizing the invasion of France in the summer of 1944. And throughout the three years during which the struggle for the second front lasted, its main opponent invariably proved to be Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Great Britain. That was how in practice his formula that the British would give to the USSR in this war 'whatever help we can' was deciphered."

This harsh criticism of Churchill by Maisky was temporally coincident not only with the ongoing struggle of the Eighth Army against Rommel in North Africa but with the building up of the Japanese juggernaut in the Far East, which in a matter of a few months would vanquish British and Commonwealth forces in Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, and Burma. Britain would be reeling to the easternmost borders of India. Ceylon and shipping in the Indian Ocean would be bombed by Japanese naval aircraft, and the hard-won victory in East Africa just months previously would appear to be in jeopardy. Churchill was candid when he informed the Russians that establishing a second front in northwest France or in the Arctic was just not feasible. The only problem was that no one in the Soviet hierarchy cared to believe him.

Stalin's sense of reality was not entirely well grounded in his rude demands for material aid from Britain only one week after the invasion commenced. His list included 3,000 fighter aircraft, 20,000 light antiaircraft guns, radar, and night-fighting equipment. While Churchill was willing to give Stalin some cloaked Ultra decrypts about German troop movements, Churchill's private secretary, John Colville, noted, "Molotov will tell us nothing beyond what is in the official communiqués. Now, in their hour of need, the Soviet government—or at any rate Molotov—is as suspicious and uncooperative as when we were negotiating a treaty in the summer of 1939."

On July 3, Stalin made his first radio address to the Russian people about the war with Germany. Although Anglo-Soviet diplomatic activity was resumed at the beginning of July, Churchill, according to Maisky's memoirs, was put out by the fact that Stalin did not in any way respond to his broadcast of June 22, but decided all the same to take the first step toward establishing more friendly relations with the head of the Soviet state. On July 7, 1941, Churchill sent Stalin a letter explaining that Britain's help to the Soviet Union would take the form principally of air bombardment of Germany. Cripps personally handed Stalin this letter, and the Soviet leader stated that an Anglo-Soviet agreement should be reached

stressing two points, namely, mutual aid during the war and the obligation not to sign a separate peace with Germany.

Stalin explicitly stated that he wanted a formal agreement with Britain to "allay his continuing suspicion that Churchill wanted to stand aside while Germany and Russia destroyed each other." Two days later, Churchill replied to Stalin, "I should like to assure you that we are wholly in favour of the agreed declaration of purpose." An agreement for mutual military assistance was signed on July 12, 1941, between Molotov and Cripps. Both of the just mentioned points were included.

Churchill was driven by one overwhelming motive: he needed Russia to continue fighting until the historically notorious winter months started, since a separate peace between Stalin and Hitler would only enable the Nazis to turn back on the British Isles again. In Churchill's Anglo-Soviet agreement, the prime minister had to attend to American sentiments against any secret deals on European soil, thus, a limited pact was presented to the House of Commons. Furthermore, Stalin brazenly demanded in a July 18 message that a British attack in northern France and the Arctic be undertaken at once. Churchill responded to Maisky, saying that "unfortunately, what he asks is at present impracticable." Stalin was furious at Churchill's refusal to open a proposed second front where and when he requested it.

According to Maisky, Churchill began a detailed justification of his statement. In his words, the Germans had 40 divisions in France and had strongly fortified the coasts of France, Belgium, and Holland. The forces of Britain, which had for more than a year been fighting alone, were under extreme strain and scattered far from the home islands. In addition, the Battle of the Atlantic was still raging, consuming a vast amount of British naval and air resources, including substantial losses due to the U-boat menace. Churchill apologized that under present conditions, Britain was incapable of doing more than air bombardment of Germany.

On July 30, Stalin received Roosevelt's adviser Harry Hopkins in Moscow. Hopkins' report to Roosevelt made a deep impression on him, with important consequences. On August 15, Churchill and Roosevelt sent a combined message to Stalin from their Newfoundland meeting (the same meeting that produced the Atlantic Charter), saying, "We have taken the opportunity afforded by the report of Mr. Harry Hopkins on his return from Moscow to consult together as to how best our two coun-

Continued on page 77

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ON the night of April 8, 1940, almost four million people went to bed at peace in the midst of a world war.

By the time they were having breakfast, they found themselves in the middle of it, and Denmark's resistance, as little as it was, was already over. The German conquest of Denmark in World War II was the swiftest military conquest in history—less than three hours—but still had moments of high drama.

"I could not reproach Denmark if she surrendered to Nazi attack," British Prime Minister Winston Churchill conceded. "The other two Scandinavian countries [Norway, Sweden] have at least a ditch over which they can defy the tiger. Denmark is so terribly close that it would be impossible to defend her."

Denmark was just 250 "terribly close" miles from Berlin itself, its 42-mile border with northern Germany indefensible. The Jutland Peninsula, extending 200 miles into the Baltic Sea and making up 70 percent of Denmark's mere 16,629 square miles, with its very flatness was ideal for the type of military maneuvering the Germans had just perfected in Poland: blitzkrieg, or lightning war.

The rest of the country was a geographic jigsaw of 500 islands, just 100 inhabited, none any

The German invasion of Denmark led to a swift victory in the spring of 1940.

BY JOHN W. OSBORN, JR.

BLITZKRIEG

more defendable than Jutland. Most of them were linked by skillfully constructed bridges, including the key two-mile Storstrom, connecting Masnedo Island with Sjaelland, and on it, the capital city of Copenhagen. The population was too small to build a significant army, and the last time the country had fought a war was in 1864, ending in a defeat by Prussia.

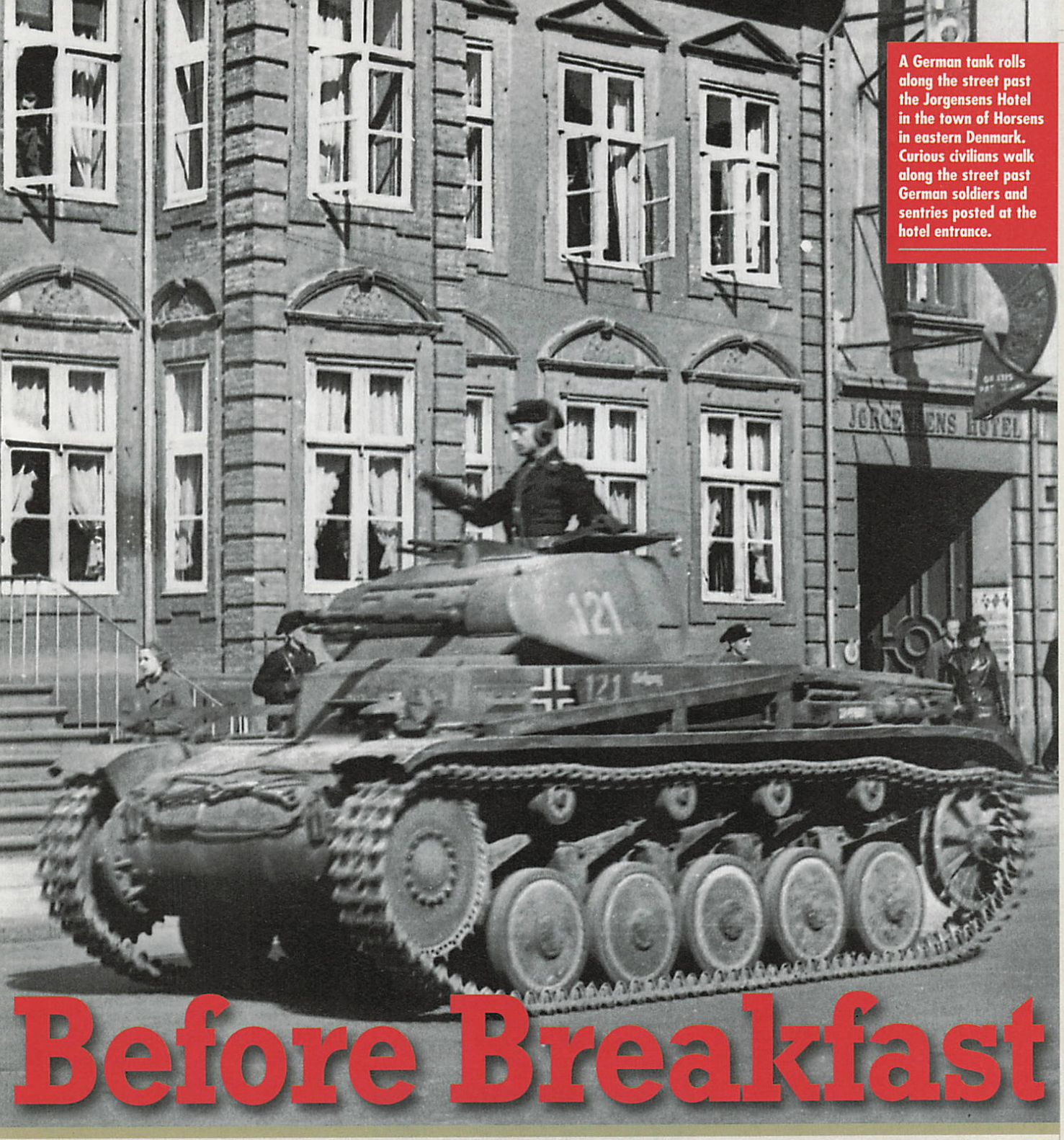
"I have not the slightest doubt that the Germans will swarm all over Denmark when it suits them," Churchill concluded. "I would not in any case undertake to guarantee Denmark."

Such pessimism also ran all the way to the top in Copenhagen. "Denmark is not the watchdog of Scandinavia. What is the point?" asked Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning. He and the equally depressed and desperate foreign minister, Peter Munch, had to pin their hopes—and Denmark's fate—on a non-aggression pact with Germany. By the time it was signed on May 31, 1939, though, Hitler's blatant violation of the Munich Pact and march into Prague two months earlier left no doubt what Hitler's word was worth.

Back in 1937, a Danish colonel complained, "From the German view, we do actually invite occupation." Stauning and Munch made it appear even more so after the outbreak of war, actually cutting Denmark's army in half to just 15,450 by April 1940, 7,840 of them conscripts with just two months service.

If they wanted to show Hitler that Denmark was no threat, they also showed it would be no

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-754-0051N-24; Photo: Stolzenberg



A German tank rolls along the street past the Jorgensens Hotel in the town of Horsens in eastern Denmark. Curious civilians walk along the street past German soldiers and sentries posted at the hotel entrance.

Before Breakfast

problem if the time for invasion ever came. Eventually, Hitler would find a pretext to invade through an incident the Danes had no control over, and Germany's seizure of Denmark would provide a steppingstone to invade another country that was the real German target.

"It is in our interest that Norway remains neutral," General Franz Halder, chief of the German general staff, recorded in his diary on New Year's Day, 1940. The Germans were satisfied, so long as badly needed iron ore from Sweden could be shipped from Norway's northernmost port of Narvik then sailed safely down its frozen fjords to Germany.

Halder nonetheless observed ominously, "We must be prepared to change our view on this, should England threaten Norway's neutrality."

From the German point of view, the Royal Navy did just that, ignoring Norwegian sovereignty to enter its waters to storm the German supply ship *Altmark*, liberating almost 300 British merchant seamen held captive in its hold.

The British would say the Germans committed the first violation when they did not release the prisoners once in neutral waters, and the Norwegians were complicit by not insisting, though the prisoners' banging and yelling was plain to hear. The incident was enough for Hitler to order Norway occupied and, as an afterthought, Denmark as well.

Danish airfields were recognized as vital for any Norwegian campaign. The initial planning envisioned putting diplomatic pressure on the

Danes to use them—overlooking the fact that their king, Christian X, and Norway's own king, Haakon VII, were brothers—but the general in charge of the campaign, Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, insisted on occupying Denmark as "a land bridge" to Norway.

The first Germans to invade Denmark came in the guise of tourists, a more familiar form of foreigner.

One walked along Copenhagen's bustling Langelinie (Long Canal) in the city's center, then made his way to the Kastellet, the 16th-century fortress, and in a different era, Denmark's Pentagon. He asked a sergeant for a "tour" of the fortress. "He complied with my request in the friendliest manner," the "tourist" was to remember. "To start with, he took me to the corporal's canteen where I drank a glass of beer with him. At the same time, he told me something of the Citadel, its garrison and importance. After some beer with him, he showed me the quarters of the commanders, the military offices, the telephone exchange, the watch posts, and the old gates by the north and south entrances."

With the tour over, the German flew home. He would be back in five days—on business.

Other "tourists" were curiously occupying themselves with some of Denmark's decidedly less scenic sights, such as Masnedo Island and the Storstrom Bridge. In a local bar, they heard talk about the island's forts guarding the bridge, itself guarded by "white Italians." A special military unit? The "tourists" took note, gathered intelligence, and reported the military mystery to Berlin, with comic consequences to come.

While Danish officials tried to be hopeful, Danish officers were learning how hopeless their situation really was. Major Hans Lunding ran a spy ring in northern Germany, which sent him reports of troop concentrations, increases in military traffic, and the stockpiling of supplies. In Berlin, the Danish naval attaché got word from the Dutch military attaché, who had gotten it from an anti-Nazi officer in the Abwehr (German intelligence). "Denmark will be occupied next week."

On April 7, one final German "tourist," General Hans Himer, arrived by train, his soon-to-be-needed uniform in protected diplomatic luggage.

Himer was not there to see the sights so much as to have the city in his sight, proceeding to make a busy day of it, walking the Langelinie to note if it was ice free, next circling the Kastellet and finding its weakest point at the southeast King's Gate. He phoned the information in code to Hamburg, then finally arranged for a truck to be on the Langelinie in two days—at the odd hour of 4 AM.

The next day, the British made their own move regarding Norway, mining its territorial waters. Though it was a Sunday, Foreign Minister Munch met with the longtime German ambassador, Cecil von Renthe-Fink. He was an honorable Hindenburg-era holdover, too long comfortably cocooned in Copenhagen.

"Hitler has no warlike intentions toward Denmark," Renthe-Fink genuinely believed, and he reassured Munch, who remained optimistically obtuse to the very end. In just hours, they were to have a shattering, shocking, revolting return to reality, Nazi-style.

All: Public Domain

Prior to the German invasion in the spring of 1940, Danish King Christian X rides his horse through the streets of the capital city of Copenhagen.

While attending a lecture on January 13, 1941, Cecil von Renthe-Fink (left) confers with Danish Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning.

German General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst (left) planned and led the German invasions of Denmark and Norway. Danish Foreign Minister Peter Munch wanted to believe that Hitler did not intend to invade his country.

A day earlier, German airborne commander Walter Giercke had his own meeting in a local headquarters in Hamburg housed in a requisitioned hotel following an emergency summons to fly immediately from his base in Stendahl. He found himself in a room full of nervous generals, facing a major with a map covering the wall behind him.

"See this bridge?" the major pointed to the map. It was the Storstrom. "We've got to capture this bridge intact. If you were dropped, do you think you could hold it until infantry arrives?"

Captain Walter Giercke was being handed the first airborne operation in history!

It was a last-minute addition to the invasion because of the report of those unknown "white Italians." Though all he had for intelligence were a brochure and a postcard taken during a "tourist" visit, Giercke assured them that there would be no problem. "The relief of the generals surrounding me was palpable," he recalled after the war.

Throughout the preceding Sunday, German warships were sighted off Jutland. Truck drivers coming back from Hamburg reported rolling past German troops for 30 miles. At the border, a journalist phoned his editor in Copenhagen, telling him of hearing the unmistakable sound of armor in the distance from his window.

Major Lunding had sent in his final report, predicting an invasion at 4 AM. In Berlin, that alert naval attaché got a suspicious offer from the Germans to tour the Western Front, seeing it as a sign that they wanted him out of the way. At a banquet inside Copenhagen's Amalienbord Palace, by contrast, the 70-year-old King Christian X, who had ruled since 1912, dismissed talk of war, heading off to the Royal Theater to laugh his way through Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

It was the last good laugh for the king for five long, dismal years.

Captain Giercke was preparing his part to make them so back at his base. "The parachutes were packed, the ammunition supplies and the weapons laced in their containers," he wrote soon afterward. "Everything took place quickly under the cover of an alert exercise. The atmosphere was not tense, but rather ordered and tranquil. Activity on the runway was unceasing: trucks were supplying planes, Fallschirmjäger with their parachutes ready were awaiting orders, and engines were being checked. More aircraft arrived: Stukas and

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-753-0001N-17; Photo: Otto Lanzinger

At Aalborg, Denmark, in the northern Jutland Peninsula, German troops march from an airfield toward their objective after landing. The invaders swiftly overcame all organized Danish resistance.

bombers. Finally, the paratroopers boarded the aircraft, which began to move down the runway. The squadron commander reported that his unit was going to make a "practice flight over the sea." The airfield was abuzz with activity in the noticeably tense atmosphere, and everyone was at his post. The support and air defense were essential. The canteens were packed, and songs and marches could be heard everywhere.

"Only the platoon commanders, together with their company commander, remained in the barracks–they knew the truth about the 'exercise,'" Giercke continued. "They also knew once they received the code word, they could discuss the mission assigned to them. This did not take long in coming. That same afternoon, orders were given to the troops. The sergeant major gathered the company. The men listened attentively to their commander: 'The Führer has decided to attack Denmark and Norway in order to protect the Reich. We have received the order to occupy Denmark tomorrow.'"

Beginning officially at 4:15 AM, April 9, 1940, the invasion of Denmark had secretly started hours before under cover of darkness with Abwehr agents cutting communications while special forces seized bridges along the border, which the nervous Danish government in the days before had pulled troops from to avoid any excuses for invasion. But it was also begun by a cruel display of diplomatic deceit.

Fifteen minutes earlier in Copenhagen, Foreign Minister Munch was awakened in his ministry apartment by a call informing him that Renthe-Fink was already on his way for an urgent meeting. Munch had just enough time to throw on a suit when Renthe-Fink arrived, the diplomat with tears in his eyes. The night before, General Himer had handed him a sealed envelope with instructions to deliver it at this odd hour, and he did not have to read it to know its contents.

Munch soon understood the diplomat's distress.

"The Reich government has beginning today set in motion certain military operations which will lead to the occupation of strategic points on Danish soil," Renthe-Fink announced. "The Reich government," he droned on, "declares to the royal Danish government that Germany has no intention of through her measures now or in the future of touching upon the territorial integrity and political independence of the Kingdom of Denmark."

Both men were bitterly aware of what those words were worth. Renthe-Fink left, calling Hitler "a man without honor," as his own government had used his personal honor. Frantically phoning Amalienborg but getting no response, Munch had to rush to the street, hail one of the few cabs out that early, then speed off for the king.

At that moment, the German 170th and 198th Infantry Divisions and the 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade, 40,000 troops in all, were pouring over the bottleneck border with Jutland, eventually driving 25 miles north. The three border guards attempting to resist had been shot.

There was even less resistance to seaborne landings around the peninsula. At one location, Danish soldiers helped dock a German patrol boat, at which point the soldiers crammed below stormed out. Elsewhere, a Danish garrison specially trained to resist a German landing slept while it was happening.

"The availability of tanks and armored cars was the greatest importance," one German officer said. "They broke the first Danish positions."

Denmark had, improbably, manufactured some of the best 20mm and 37mm antitank guns in the world. In pockets of not more than 30, Danish soldiers in Jutland's little towns and roadsides quickly constructed roadblocks of felled trees and handcarts, then fired away with them. "Not smart in appearance, perhaps, but they are tough and crack shots," a German colonel conceded about these determined, scrappy Danes.

They would actually knock out a quartet of tanks and a dozen armored cars. In 2005, the archives of the Danish gun manufacturer revealed that the Germans admitted they had 200 casualties in those few hours in Jutland, contradicting the legend of no resistance by the Danes. After firing, the Danes were either quickly surrounded or retreated into the towns to trade shots around corners in the back streets.

One company of Danish troops escaped, taking the regular morning ferry to Sweden. Another German attack was to come from the sky, aiming to make military history but ending as just a farcical footnote.

Captain Giercke was en route to his target, the Storstrom Bridge, with its supposed white Italians. "Everything was ready to go," he wrote of the preparations. "The engines were repeatedly checked. The soldiers moved like shadows on the runway. Slowly, imperceptibly, the night gave way to the dawn, which brought a sense of relief to the captain of the transport squadron. The sun would be up in an hour. The light at this time of day made it almost impossible to distinguish sky from the sea in the mix of clouds and darkness. We took off soon after, sheltered within the gray darkness of the morning. The Danish coast appeared like a shining strip. The antiaircraft fire shone, too. The sun appeared like a gigantic red ball above the horizon. Below us were large houses, which appeared empty and asleep, the seas around us occasionally dotted with small boats. Suddenly, the large bridge appeared. A huge construction, we were upon it in no time. The aircraft continued descending, and we saw land again, the island of Masnedo. We could also see the road, as well as the railway line which crossed the island. Soon after, a chimney appeared. Finally, we got the signal: 'Jump!'"

Giercke and his Germans did jump from 500 feet at 5:35 AM, 20 minutes behind schedule. He wrote of storming the local fort: "The Danish sailors came out with their hands up and legs shaking, fear written on their faces." In fact, though, all the Danes he found were a civilian caretaker, Henry Schmidt, and Privates Adolf Kernwein and Ole Jensen. Their sole weapon was an obsolete Remington rifle with no bullets.

The Danes had abandoned the fort some time earlier. Those "white Italians" the Germans had been concerned about turned out to be chickens, a breed kept by caretaker Schmidt.

Grabbing bicycles, the paratroopers pedaled down to the bridge, captured it without resistance, and soon, as planned, linked up with advancing Wehrmacht units. A second airdrop 45 minutes after Giercke's captured a more critical target, the airfield at Allborg on Jutland's northern tip. The capture of Copenhagen soon followed.

Bild 101II-MN-1007-08; Photo: Herbert Franz Augst

At the time Ambassador Renthe-Fink and Foreign Minister Munch were facing each other, a German passenger ship turned troop transport, the Hansestadt Danzig, was sliding unimpeded through Copenhagen Harbor. The commander of the harbor fort attempted the gesture of firing a warning shot, but winter had frozen the gun's grease. The only other resistance that day in Copenhagen would prove to be deadlier in its soldierly symbolism.

The Hansestadt Danzig continued on to dock at the Langelinie, and in front of the few astonished dock workers already at work, 850 German soldiers trooped down the gangway, and at their head, that "tourist" back now on "business."

The Germans split into three columns, two headed for the Kastellet, the last for Amalienborg Palace. One gate at the Kastellet was blown down by a premature explosion, killing a German soldier. The Germans simply walked through the others, outnumbering the guards. The structure, garrison, and Danish chief of staff were taken without a shot. General Kurt Himer, who had been directing events from his hotel telephone until the Danish postal authorities finally cut him off, was soon back in touch with his forces in Denmark and headquarters in Hamburg when a truck transported from the Hansestadt Danzig arrived with radio equipment.

Two other more desperate officers were on the move around town. The Danish commander in chief, General Walter Wein Prior, had left the Kastellet scant moments before the Germans had barged in, headed for the War Ministry. Prior met his naval counterpart, Vice Admiral Hjalmar Rechnitzer, who would have been the controversial figure of the day's events, except there would never be anyone to argue for his side. Prior phoned to put Denmark's air force, only 48 planes, into action. Just one managed to get airborne, helplessly downed in minutes, the pilot and observer killed. Half the others were quickly damaged or destroyed on the ground, while a single unfortunate Messerschmitt Me-110 fighter would be the Luftwaffe's lone loss, downed by antiaircraft fire. The pilot and his crewman survived. As they became the sole prisoners taken by the Danes throughout the war, another German pilot landed, got out, thanked the Danes who were taking care of them, and then took off. The Danes were too surprised to take a third prisoner.

Meanwhile, Prior and Rechnitzer had made their way to Amalienborg to find their civilian counterparts, who were scared by the sound of scattered shots outside and on the phone with Ambassador Renthe-Fink in desperate dialogue. The German diplomat warned that Copenhagen would be bombed if the Danes did not surrender. The Danes replied that they needed their king's consent. A few minutes later, another phone call gave rise to the day's most controversial conversation. It came from the naval headquarters, requesting authorization to start firing.

With the crisis looming, Rechnitzer had sent some of his best commanders on sudden leave the day before. Now he, in effect, put the whole Danish Navy on leave. Without consulting his counterpart, the cabinet, or the king, Rech-

nitzer gave the order not to fire. At that, Prior erupted in a burst of fury, and the outrage was not to end with just him.

Outside the king's palace, at 6 AM, 20th-century German soldiers in field gray uniforms faced Danish Life Guards arrayed in Napoleonic-era uniforms domed with bearskin shakos. In a brief firefight, six Guards were killed, a dozen wounded. Surprised at the unexpected resistance, the Germans scurried off to prepare for a stronger assault, but it never took place. Inside the palace, the shooting had reduced the cabinet to pure panic. Their state of mind would improve when King Christian finally appeared.

The merry monarch of the night before was now a miserable one, pale, trembling, likely in shock, close to fainting. "Have the troops fought for long enough?" he helplessly asked General Prior.

"The troops have not fought at all!" Prior angrily answered, unaware of the scattered resistance across Jutland. "Take the government to the Hosraeltelejren military base and make a stand there."

But Prior proved to be the lone voice of resistance. Outside, German Heinkel bombers escorted by Messerschmitt fighters were overhead, requested by Himer to drop leaflets. "Roaring over the Danish capital, they did not fail to make their impression," Himer would note smugly. A raid was narrowly averted, called off just in time after a code was misread and thought to be authorizing the bombing.

The king finally decided it was hopeless to continue, so at 6:35 AM a messenger left to deliver the capitulation to Ambassador Renthe-Fink. In their final humiliation, with no local radio on the air yet, the Danes had to resort to using the Germans' own radio equipment at the Kastellet with a Danish wavelength to broadcast the cease-fire order to their soldiers and sailors.

Final resistance ended around 7:20 AM, April 9, 1940, so while the Danes were having their breakfast, the blitzkrieg in Denmark drew to its conclusion. Ambassador Renthe-Fink and General Himer appeared at Amalienborg at 2 PM to put the finishing touches on Denmark's debacle.

"The 70-year-old King appeared inwardly shattered," Himer recalled. "Although he preserved outward appearances and maintained absolute dignity during the audience. His whole body trembled. He declared that he and his government would do everything possible to keep peace and order in the country to eliminate any friction between the German troops and the country. He wished to spare his country further misfortune and misery."

Himer responded with assurances of German goodwill, though both knew, with the nonaggression pact so callously cast aside, that it would only last only as long as it suited Hitler. At the conclusion, the king, in his own attempt at goodwill, remarked, "General, may I, as an old soldier, tell you something as soldier to soldier? The Germans have done the incredible again! One must admit it is magnificent work!"

It was the last show of kingly courtesy Christian X was to show the Germans.

"My mood is quite black, and I feel extremely dejected and heartbroken," Admiral Rechnitzer wrote. "It all seems so extremely sad to me."

But it was sadder for the families of the 16 Danes who died and the 23 wounded resisting the invasion. There were two additional career casualties: Rechnitzer, scorned by his officers, and Foreign Minister Munch, who was to resign within weeks, his reputation equally in ruins.

Danes that morning walked among the Germans in a mixture of curiosity and shock. "In Prague, they spat at us. In Warsaw, they shot at us. Here, we are being gaped at like a traveling circus," a German officer commented.

The dismayed Danes vented their anger elsewhere. "You can look anyone in the face, with

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: This group of confident Danish soldiers posed for a photograph on April 9, 1940, the day the Germans invaded their homeland. According to original information accompanying the image, two of the soldiers in the photo were killed in action later that day. BELOW: Manning a 20mm Madsen rapid-fire cannon, a Danish gun crew stands vigil at a crossroads in the town of Abenra, Denmark, 16 miles from the German frontier. Sharp clashes did occur during the morning of April 9, but the weight of German arms proved overwhelming. OPPOSITE: During their occupation of the Citadel, or Kastellet, German soldiers stand guard around a group of Danish prisoners, including military personnel, civilians, and police officers.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Buildings and equipment go up in flames at the German torpedo boat shipyard in Copenhagen. The fire and resulting explosions were the handiwork of Danish resistance fighters. BELOW: Following the arrest of Danish resistance members, civilians erupt in anger and attack German troops while turning over a military van. This incident occurred in Odense, the third-largest city in Denmark.

your heads erect, knowing you have done your duty," General Prior said in a message to his soldiers, but in the streets of Copenhagen, they were spat on.

The contempt spread abroad, fueled by the scenes of curiosity fraudulently presented by the Germans as friendly fraternization, announcing no casualties to give the image that they had been unopposed. In the United States, Danish naval cadets were jeered in ports while a boxing commentator complained how a one-rounder had gone down "without fighting—like a Dane."

In 700 pages of postwar writing, Prime Minister Churchill gave the invasion one line: "Denmark was easily overrun after a formal resistance in which a few faithful soldiers were killed." In the next five years, though, Danes were to show that if they could not fight, they could resist. The king set the tone the following morning on his customary horseback ride through the streets of Copenhagen. He refused to return a single German salute.

Danes got the message about how to act toward the Germans. It would slowly dawn on the Germans just what was behind the veneer of customary Danish courtesy. "To the Danes," the *Times of London* observed, "belongs the credit of inventing a new order unthought-of by Hitler: the Order of the Cold Shoulder."

The cold shoulder soon turned to sabotage, eventually requiring three times the German soldiers to occupy Denmark as to conquer it. The Germans, under what they called their "model protectorate," allowed the Danish courts and government to function, even leaving the schools and press alone. The Germans even allowed the only free election in occupied Europe in 1942, expecting the local Quisling party to be voted in.

The result was another Danish rout—of the collaborators, who received just three percent of the vote. The inevitable confrontation came in August 1943.

The killing of a Danish Resistance member led to a general strike, paralyzing all of Denmark while 200 acts of sabotage occurred. Fed up, the Germans handed the government an ultimatum with a seven-hour deadline. When it was rejected with just 15 minutes left, the Germans dismissed the fiction of the protectorate, imposed martial law, confined the king in his palace, dismissed the government, and moved against the Danish military. Danish troops prepared to resist, but their commander in chief, General Ebbe Goertze, ordered them not to fight. The Danish Navy in Copenhagen Harbor scuttled 29 vessels while 13 escaped to Sweden.

A few weeks later, in one of the war's great acts of resistance, the Danes smuggled almost their entire Jewish population to safety in Sweden. Sabotage continued, and the Germans reacted ruthlessly, with more than 1,000 Danes murdered in the streets or even in their homes by terror gangs of Gestapo agents or criminal collaborators. More Danes were fated to die but, ironically, some would die while in German uniform.

Some Danes fought as volunteers in the Waffen SS on the Eastern Front, and one single bloody day, June 2, 1942, Danish SS casualties exceeded those incurred resisting the invasion of their own country by 21 dead and 58 wounded. When they returned, it would be their turn to be insulted, booed, and jeered parading through Copenhagen.

If Denmark's invasion was almost bloodless and its occupation bloodier, its liberation came without bloodshed. The German Army in northwestern Europe surrendered to Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's forces in May 1945, and the German troops in Denmark simply walked out. The Danes vowed, "Aldrig mere 9 April" (Never Again an April 9) and abandoned neutrality to help found NATO in 1949.

Author John W. Osborn, Jr., is resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He has written for WWII History *on a variety of topics.*

Actual size is 40.6 mm

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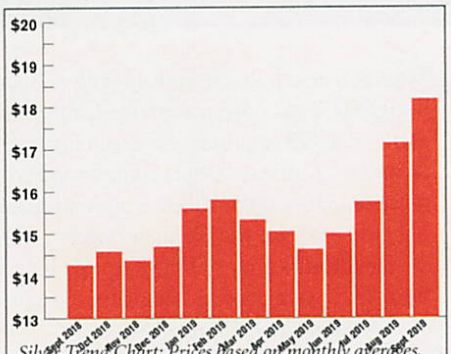

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Their rifles at the ready, American paratroopers rush through the street in a Dutch town during Operation Market Garden.

American Airborne AT THE BRIDGE TOO FAR

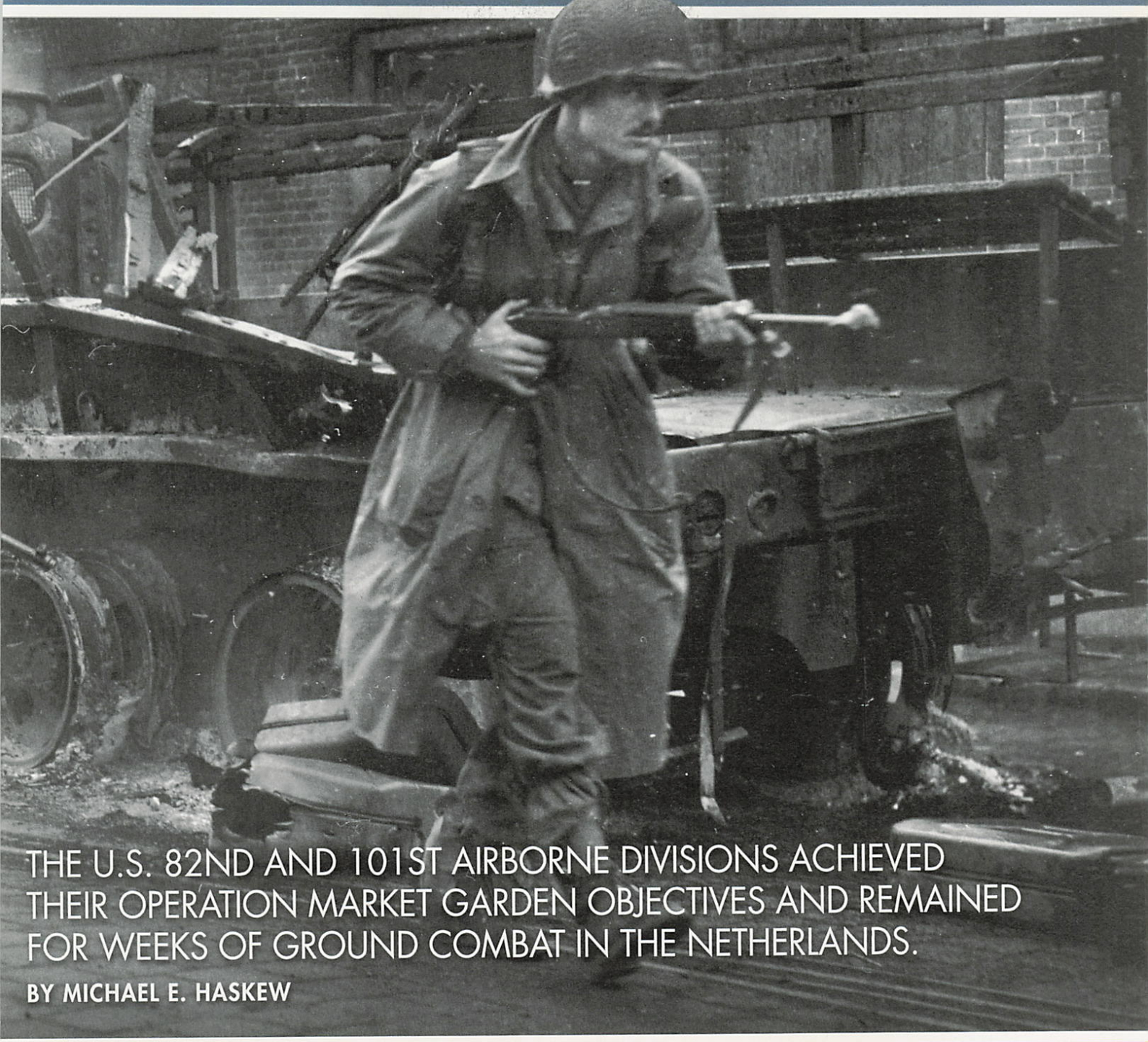
With his troops in a bitter fight with German forces in northern France in the late summer of 1944, General Omar Bradley, commander of the Allied 12th Army Group, could not believe his ears.

"Had the pious teetotaling Montgomery wobbled into SHAEF with a hangover, I could not have been more astonished than I was by the daring adventure he proposed," Bradley remembered.

Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery had led British and Commonwealth forces to victory in North Africa during the pivotal Battle of El Alamein in 1942 and then chased the German-Italian Panzer Armee Afrika across 1,000 miles of desert. Coupled with the Allied landings of Operation Torch in the west, the Axis forces were caught in a vice and defeated thoroughly by the spring of 1943. Through it all, Montgomery had proceeded with caution, meticulously planned, and made sure that his forces were superior in number to the enemy. The same conduct had characterized his command of the 21st Army Group since the D-Day landings in Normandy on June 6, 1944.

Now, however, it appeared that the cautious, deliberate Montgomery had gone off his rocker. As summer gave way to autumn in 1944, Montgomery had been lobbying General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, to abandon or at least suspend the broad front strategy that had the Allied armies advancing sluggishly toward the German frontier, where the fixed fortifications of the Siegfried Line, or West Wall, were waiting, their garrisons intent on defending the Fatherland.

Montgomery hammered home his concerns. Not only did stiff German resistance promise to become even tougher, but supply lines were stretching. The availability of fuel, ammunition, foodstuffs, and all the elements that keep an



THE U.S. 82ND AND 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISIONS ACHIEVED THEIR OPERATION MARKET GARDEN OBJECTIVES AND REMAINED FOR WEEKS OF GROUND COMBAT IN THE NETHERLANDS.

BY MICHAEL E. HASKEW

advancing military force on the move were becoming scarce.

Montgomery continually argued that the American Third and Canadian First Armies should be halted and resupplied just enough to consolidate their gains and hold their lines against any German counterattack. His own British Second Army and the American First Army would then take center stage, receive the vast majority of war matériel, outflank the Siegfried Line, and rapidly thrust into the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany. A swift and successful offensive under Montgomery's command would cripple Germany's capacity to wage war and open a direct route to the Nazi capital of Berlin.

On September 10, 1944, Montgomery outlined his tactical blueprint in a meeting with Eisenhower in Brussels, Belgium. Along with the strategic overview of the offensive, Montgomery proposed a preparatory attack that was bold and shocking: Operation Market Garden.

A two-phase offensive, Market Garden called for airborne troops to parachute into the German-occupied Netherlands and seize key bridges across the Maas, Waal, and Lower Rhine Rivers. The paratroopers would hold the bridges until relieved by ground troops racing swiftly through the Netherlands and into Germany. The war might even be won by Christmas 1944 if everything went according to plan.

The seizure of the bridges and adjacent canals was essential for the ground forces to move swiftly. Only a single highway was practical for the drive of approximately 60 miles from the Allied lines in Belgium to the Dutch town of Arnhem. The veteran British XXX Corps would speed down that single road from its bridgehead across the Meuse-Escaut Canal, slicing through expected enemy resistance, relieving the paratroopers at the successive bridges, and then serving as the vanguard of

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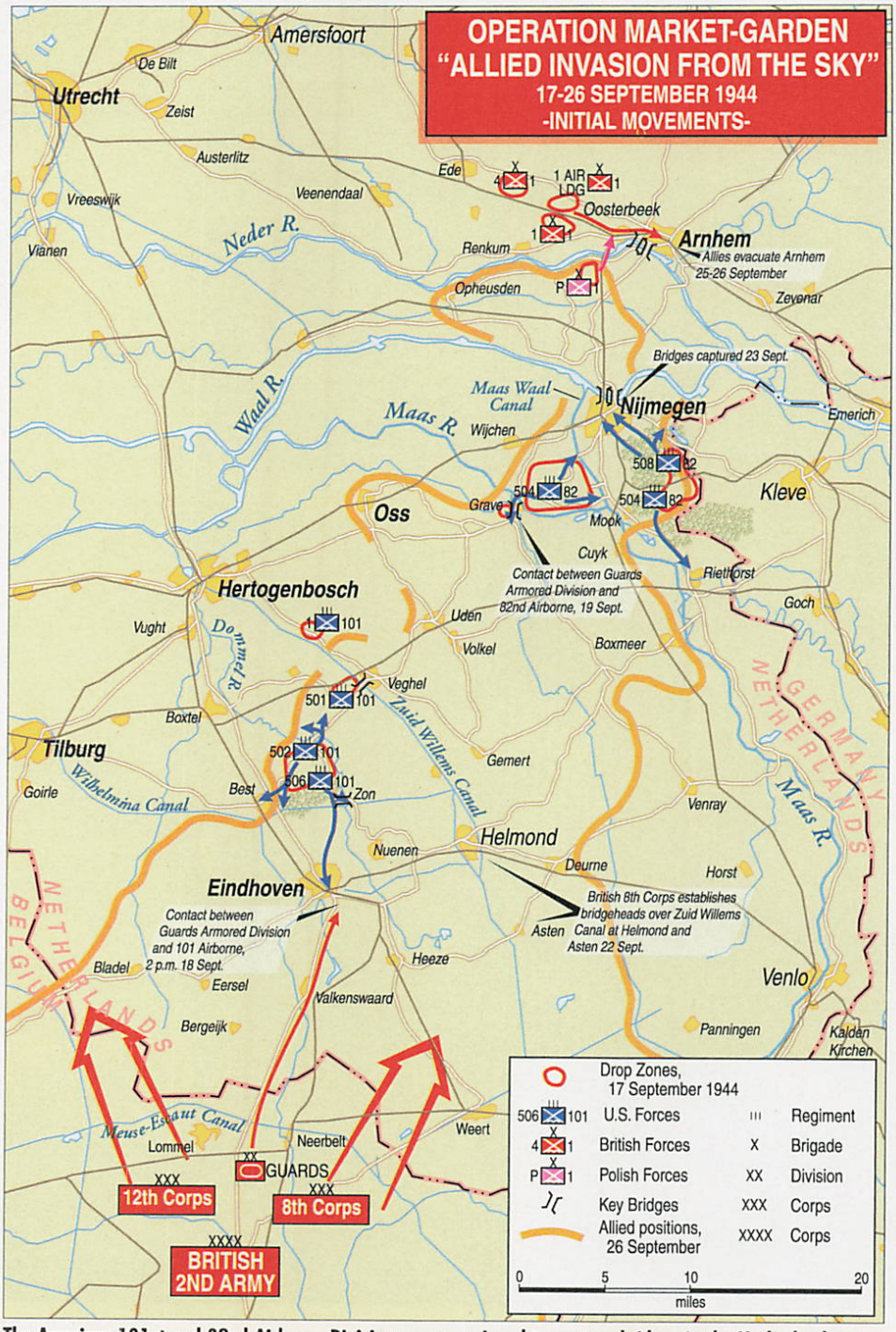
Map © 2020 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



The American 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions were assigned to capture bridges in the Netherlands to allow XXX Corps to link up with the British 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem.

the war-winning offensive that would then thrust like a dagger into Germany.

Montgomery's plan relied on the First Allied Airborne Army, activated just a month earlier, under the command of General Lewis H. Brereton. Brereton commanded the American XVIII Airborne Corps and the headquarters of the I British Airborne Corps. In early September, General Matthew Ridgway was elevated to command the XVIII Airborne Corps, and General James Gavin was promoted to lead the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division. Along with the 82nd, the corps also included the 101st Airborne Division, under General Maxwell Taylor, and the 17th Airborne Division, commanded by General William Miley, as well as the IX Troop Carrier Command and other independent units. The British I Airborne Corps, under General Frederick Arthur Montague "Boy" Browning, included the 1st and 6th Airborne Divisions, the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade, some special operations troops of the SAS, and allocated air transport formations.

Since taking part in the D-Day invasion and the Normandy Campaign, the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions had been refitting and absorbing replacements in England. The 17th Airborne Division, activated in April 1943, arrived in Britain at the end of August 1944, too late for Market Garden. The combat veterans of the 82nd and 101st became the American contribution to Market, the airborne phase of Montgomery's plan. The British 6th Airborne had also taken part in Operation Overlord and did not return to England until early September, having suffered 4,500 casualties during three months of fighting. Therefore, the 1st Airborne, commanded by General Roy Urquhart, would constitute the British contingent for Market.

As the overall Market Garden plan was developed, the 101st Airborne would secure the southernmost bridges over the Wilhelmina Canal at the town of Son, a pair spanning the Dommel River at St. Odenrode, and then four more over the Aa River near the town of Veghel. The town of Eindhoven was also an objective, while the 101st held open 15 miles of the vital road toward Arnhem for XXX Corps. By the end of Market Garden, the troopers of the 101st would call this stretch of road "Hell's Highway."

North of the 101st zone of operations, the 82nd Airborne was to capture the bridge at Grave, the longest in Europe at 1,960 feet. The 82nd would also take one or more of the four bridges across the Maas-Waal Canal, another across the Waal at Nijmegen, and the area around the village of Groesbeek. The final leg of the XXX Corps dash involved a drive from Nijmegen to Arnhem, where the 1st Airborne was to seize three bridges across the Lower Rhine.

Market Garden was scheduled for September 17, just a week after Montgomery and Eisenhower met. When various unit commanders were briefed on the operation, they were told that only light German opposition was expected. General Browning was said to have referred to it as a "party." Gavin was troubled as he analyzed the 82nd Airborne role.

"The big Nijmegen bridge posed a serious problem," Gavin observed. "Seizing it with overwhelming strength at the outset would have been meaningless if I did not get at least two other bridges: the big bridge at Grave and at least one of the four over the Canal. Further, even if I captured it, if I had lost all of the high ground that controlled the entire sector, as well as the resupply and glider landing zones, I would be in a serious predicament. Everything depended on the weight and direction of the enemy reaction, and this could not be deter-

mined until we were on the ground. The problem was how much could be spared how soon for employment on the bridge."

The largest airborne operation in history to date, Market-Garden developed in a remarkably short period. Realistically, the time of preparation was inadequate to thoroughly address nagging concerns regarding logistics, supply, and—critically—the level of German resistance expected.

Intelligence reports contradicted the notion that the German Army was in full retreat. In fact, the Dutch Resistance warned that both the 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions were near Arnhem recovering from fierce fighting in Normandy. Coincidentally, as Market Garden gained momentum the German 59th and 245th Infantry Divisions were relocating from the area of the Fifteenth Army to that of the First Parachute Army, directly in the path of the offensive.

Eisenhower's chief of staff, General Walter Bedell Smith, relayed mounting concerns about the German presence in the Netherlands to Montgomery. The response was dismissive, uncharacteristically bold for Montgomery.

Smith wrote, "Montgomery simply waved my objections airily aside." Urquhart brought his own worries to Browning and was told that tanks seen in reconnaissance photos were probably just being repaired. Urquhart was then advised to take a short leave and rest at his home, only hours before the first transport aircraft took off.

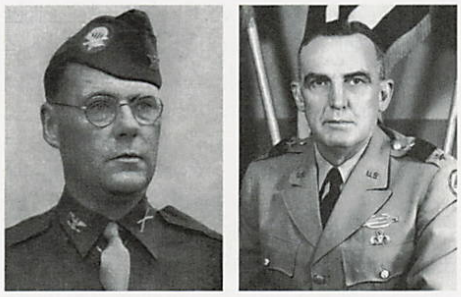
Market was designated a daylight operation. Allied air supremacy would minimize interference from German fighter planes, while the desire for a strong drop pattern and the coordination of air and ground movement would be facilitated. The fresh memory of the scattered, nocturnal Normandy jump outweighed the fears of more intense enemy antiaircraft fire that would doubtless be encountered. With Market more than 20,000 troopers would eventually be delivered to drop zones by parachute and more than 14,000 by glider along with 1,736 vehicles, 3,342 tons of ammunition, and 263 artillery pieces.

To minimize exposure to antiaircraft fire and deliver the three airborne divisions most efficiently, it was decided that troop carrier groups would take the 1st and 82nd Airborne Divisions, landing to the north, on a flight path across the estuary of the Scheldt and Maas Rivers, above roughly 80 miles of enemy-held territory. Those carrying the troopers of the 101st would fly a longer, southerly route mainly over Belgium and limiting the transit over German territory to 65 miles.

National Archives

British General Miles Dempsey, commander of the British Second Army, confers with Brig. Gen. James M. Gavin, commander of the American 82nd Airborne Division as the two consult a map of the Dutch city of Nijmegen.

British General Frederick "Boy" Browning (left) led the I Airborne Corps during Market Garden, while Lt. Col. John Frost commanded the 2nd Parachute Battalion in the heroic but futile effort at Arnhem.



Colonel Roy Lindquist (left) commanded the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division during Operation Market Garden, and Colonel Robert Sink led the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division.

Since Operation Overlord the IX Troop Carrier Command had replenished its airlift capacity to roughly that of D-Day. The 101st Airborne was supplied with 424 C-47s for paratroopers along with 70 tow planes and gliders, while the 82nd received 480 troop transports and 50 gliders and tow planes. The 1st Airborne was allocated 145 C-47s and 358 gliders and tow planes. Nearly 1,900 Allied fighter aircraft were committed to escort duty and antiaircraft suppression, while early on the morning of September 17, more than 1,400 bombers of the U.S. Eighth Air Force and Royal Air Force Bomber Command were scheduled to hit ground targets in the paths of transports and around the drop zones.

At 10:25 AM on September 17, the first American C-47s carrying pathfinders of the 101st Airborne Division began smoothly lifting off at 10-minute intervals. Flying toward drop zones north of Eindhoven, the 442nd and 435th Troop Carrier Groups got 45 planes into the air in five minutes and 32 planes aloft and in formation in 15 minutes, respectively. Carrying the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), transports of the 424th Troop Carrier Wing dropped 42 sticks of troopers three miles northwest of their assigned drop zone, but a tight drop pattern allowed the battalion to assemble 90 percent of its men and equipment in less than 45 minutes.

The 442nd and 436th placed the 506th PIR right on target. One transport was shot down along the way, but the others delivered approximately 2,200 men with such accuracy that the regimental command post was functioning and 80 percent of the troopers were assembled within an hour. Only 24 troopers that jumped sustained injuries. The war journal of the 506th called the event "an ideal jump, better than any combat or practice jump executed." The 502nd PIR was also dropped accurately, assembling within an hour.

Six groups of the 50th and 52nd Troop Carrier Wings carried the 7,250 troopers of the 82nd Airborne Division to drop zones near the Maas River south of Nijmegen. The 315th Troop Carrier Group dropped 78 sticks of paratroopers within 1,500 yards of its designated pathfinder beacons, and all of the 504th PIR except Company E, 1st Battalion came to earth in the area.

C-47s of the 440th and 441st Troop Carrier Groups dropped two battalions and the headquarters of the 508th PIR just off the northern edge of its assigned drop zone, while the 3rd Battalion came down inside its eastern perimeter. In just over one and a half hours, the regiment was 90 percent assembled. The commander of the 3rd Battalion later reported, "We could not have landed better under any circumstances."

Meanwhile, the British 1st Airborne dropped

along the north bank of the Lower Rhine, eight miles west of Arnhem. General Urquhart's Red Devils moved out swiftly toward their vital objectives. Sporadic sniper fire broke out within minutes. German resistance steadily mounted—and for good reason. The British had come to earth only two miles from the headquarters of German Army Group B. Field Marshal Walther Model believed he was the target of a kidnapping and hurried to the headquarters of General Wilhelm Bittrich, commander of the II SS Panzer Corps.

Bittrich, a sharp tactician, sensed the situation and was already responding with great insight. He ordered the tanks of the 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions to Arnhem and Nijmegen, respectively. German troops cut the roads eastward to Arnhem and blocked the advance of the 1st Airborne toward the city.

Only the 2nd Battalion, 1st Parachute Brigade, 500 men under Lt. Col. John D. Frost, reached the northern end of the main bridge across the Lower Rhine at Arnhem. These paras were set upon by superior German forces but held on grimly, waiting in vain for the arrival of the remainder of the 1st Airborne Division, which was stymied on the roads.

Due to the stiff resistance west of Arnhem, Operation Market Garden was doomed to fail. The 1st Airborne Division fought gallantly for 10 days, but of the nearly 10,000 paratroopers Urquhart had taken into the vicinity of Arnhem just over 2,000 evaded death or capture. Frost's valiant command held out at the Arnhem highway bridge for nearly four days before surrendering. Fewer than 50 men of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Parachute Brigade managed to escape.

Only two battalions of the 101st Airborne Division failed to land in or near their drop zones on September 17. Dropping near Son, the 506th PIR, under Colonel Robert Sink, was to capture a bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal and continue south to Eindhoven. The 502nd PIR, commanded by Colonel John H. Michaelis, was to establish a perimeter around its drop zone north of the 506th for later use as a glider-landing zone. Then, it was to capture more bridges over the Wilhelmina Canal near the town of Best and one of those spanning the Dommel. Farther north, Colonel Howard Johnson's 501st was to capture four road and rail bridges on the Willems Canal and the Aa River near Veghel.

The 501st PIR made rapid progress. Lt. Col. Harry W.O. Kinnard, commanding the 1st Battalion, one of the two that had dropped in the wrong place, set off toward Veghel as some of the troopers commandeered bicycles and trucks to speed the advance. When Kinnard reached Veghel a handful of his men had already secured the railroad bridge over the Aa. The 2nd Battalion seized three bridges at Veghel, while the 3rd Battalion took the town of Eerde and cut the Veghel-St. Oedenrode highway, covering the regiment's rear.

National Archives

The jump master of a group of American airborne troops inspects each trooper prior to boarding the C-47 transport plane that will carry them over the Dutch countryside to an assigned drop zone on September 17, 1944.

The 501st secured all of its September 17 objectives in about three hours, capturing scores of prisoners. In his haste to move against Veghel, though, Kinnard had not taken all his battalion's equipment along. He left 46 men under Captain W.S. Burd to bring the equipment and several paratroopers who had been injured during the jump forward at a slower pace. Burd's detachment was attacked by a strong German force and pushed back to a single building. When word of Burd's plight reached Kinnard, Colonel Johnson allowed him to send a platoon to the rescue. The attempt failed, and the survivors of Burd's group were captured.

The other battalion of the 101st dropped outside its zone was the 1st of the 502nd led by Lt. Col. Patrick Cassidy. Cassidy's men nevertheless swept into St. Oedenrode, commanding a major highway and a bridge across the Dommel. They occupied the town, killed 20 Germans, and took another 58 prisoner.

General Taylor, commanding the 101st, recognized the importance of the rail and highway bridges over the Wilhelmina Canal near Best. Although they were not on the direct XXX Corps line of advance, Taylor considered them vital in strengthening his defensive perimeter and knew that they could be used if the route through Son was blocked.

Captain Robert E. Jones of Company H, 502nd PIR, started toward these bridges and immediately took heavy German fire. Jones sent a patrol under Lieutenant Edward L. Wierzbowski forward. The Americans came within sight of the highway bridge but were forced to dig in, their strength reduced to three officers and 15 men.

Commanding the 3rd Battalion, 502nd, Lt. Col. Robert G. Cole, who had earned the Medal of Honor in Normandy, started out with the rest of his battalion to find Jones and Company H at about 6 PM, but the effort was halted by darkness. The next morning, Cole spoke over his radio to a pilot flying nearby. The pilot asked for orange recognition panels to be placed on the ground near the battalion command post, and the officer decided to handle the chore himself. Cole raised his head slightly, shielding his eyes against the sun and looking overhead for the plane. A single shot rang out. Cole fell dead from a sniper's bullet fired from a farmhouse 300 yards away.

The capture of Best ultimately required two more days and a much larger force, including British tanks and two more battalions of troops. Pfc. Class Joe E. Mann was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism during the fight for Best. Like Cole, he was killed by a German sniper.

South of Son, General Taylor accompanied the 1st Battalion, 506th toward the Wilhelmina Canal road bridge. Just south of the town near the edge of the Zonsche Forest, German 88mm

guns opened up on the paratroopers. More 88s zeroed in on the other two battalions of the 506th, led by Colonel Sink.

Paratrooper Don Burgett of the 1st Battalion recalled the vicious battle for Son. "We organized and we began to charge the guns," he related. "The only way we were going to survive was to knock out the 88s even though a lot of us were going to die trying to do it. As we were running toward them, they fired at us at point-blank range. We overran their positions. There were several 88s. They were sandbagged and dug in and used for antiaircraft. A trooper from D Company got in close enough and fired a bazooka and knocked out one of the guns."

Both groups of the 506th advanced toward the bridge. "We overran the 88s, took the German gunners prisoner, and someone said, 'Let's take the bridge,'" Burgett continued. "We started to run toward the bridge. We were within yards of the bridge when the Germans blew it up. It went off with quite a force.... We hit the ground. I rolled over on my back because everything got real quiet, and I saw the debris in the air. I remember seeing this tiny straw that was turning slowly way up in the air and as it hit its maximum trajectory and it started to come down, it became larger and larger. About halfway down we realized the size of this thing. It was probably about two feet wide and forty feet long. There was no place to run. When it hit the ground, the ground shook like Jell-O."

With the Son bridge blown to pieces, the capture of Eindhoven was slowed. However, XXX Corps halted that evening at Valkenswaard, six miles away. Unexpectedly heavy German resistance had upset the timetable for Garden, the critical ground phase of the offensive. The narrow road was elevated above the surrounding fields, and British tanks were silhouetted against the sun, perfect targets for German antitank weapons. Each time a machine-gun nest erupted, the narrow British column was required to halt and deploy infantry to remove the threat.

By the time XXX Corps got to Eindhoven the next day, the town belonged to the 101st Airborne Division. At nightfall on the 17th, the 101st was in control of Veghel, St. Oedenrode, and Son. Although the 502nd had encountered tough German troops around Best, the objective there was secondary. With a few more hours of hard fighting, the 101st would have its stretch of Hell's Highway completely open.

As soon as they saw the first Allied soldiers, jubilant Dutch civilians had welcomed them as liberators. Early on the morning of September 18, the 506th destroyed a pair of German 88s and pushed into Eindhoven. While throngs of citizens celebrated their apparent liberation in the streets, the paratroopers disarmed a handful of Germans. One American officer recalled, "The reception was terrific. The air seemed to reek with hate for the Germans...."

Finally, at 5 PM on the 18th, the leading elements of XXX Corps rumbled through Eindhoven virtually without stopping. At Son, Canadian engineers, who had been notified that the existing bridge had been destroyed, worked through the night to deploy a prefabricated Bailey bridge. At 6:45 AM on the 19th, the tanks of XXX Corps rumbled across the Wilhelmina Canal, but they were 33 critical hours behind schedule.

Later on the morning of September 19, XXX Corps was across the Willems Canal and the Aa River at Veghel, moving into the zone of the 82nd Airborne. In the 101st sector, the primary job became holding the narrow corridor of hope open against German counterattacks. While Allied armor was advancing northward, it was imperative to keep the road open to facilitate the flow of troops and supplies.

The Germans fought back viciously against 101st defensive positions around Eindhoven, Son, St. Oedenrode, and Veghel. General Tay-

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: British troopers of the 1st Airborne Division, commanded by General Roy Urquhart, gather equipment after coming to earth in the Netherlands during the opening moments of ill-fated Operation Market Garden. BELOW: German troops were in the vicinity of Arnhem in much greater strength than anticipated, and soon the British paras in the town were isolated and fighting for their lives. These German soldiers are digging in near the embattled Dutch city on the Lower Rhine River.

lor likened the actions to the bushwhacking style of Indian fighting in the Old West. The Germans attacked repeatedly, cutting the narrow road. They were driven away each time.

On the 22nd, the Germans mounted a counterattack against Veghel supported by heavy artillery and aircraft. The attack was not completely beaten back for two days. "It was a very depressing atmosphere listening to the civilians moan, shriek, sing hymns and say their prayers," wrote Daniel Kenyon Webster of E Company, 506th PIR, remembering the steady concussions of artillery shells hammering the town.

Webster and Private Don Wiseman hunkered deeply into a foxhole. "Wiseman and I sat in our corners and cursed," Webster offered. "Every time we heard a shell come over, we closed our eyes and put our heads between our legs. Every time the shells went off, we looked up and grinned at each other."

On September 24, the Germans shot up a British column on Hell's Highway at Koevering northeast of Eindhoven. Burgett remembered, "Germans brought up some 40mm cannons and they had some self-propelled guns and they shot the British who were lined up on the side of the road and they were brewing tea in these five-gallon tins and the Germans just opened up on them. They killed over 300.

"When we got down to Koevering, the trucks were still burning," continued Burgett. "We went into the attack immediately. I remember we killed two Germans in a haystack. Then we made an attack west across the road to a farmhouse. The farmhouse was set on fire. We went into the German side and we drove them back."

When it became apparent that Market Garden was a strategic failure, the men of the 101st Airborne were able to assert that they had done their part. The division had killed many Germans and captured 3,511. Its own losses were 2,110 dead, wounded, and missing.

General Taylor recognized that the 101st's hold on the highway corridor was threatened from both east and west and dependent on the movement of the British VIII and XII Corps coming up on the flanks to assist in its defense. Responding to German probing attacks, Taylor launched limited offensive actions of his own, keeping the enemy off balance and delaying a decisive blow against the roadway to the north.

Although most troopers of the 101st expected to pull out of the line at the end of September, the division was placed under the control of the British XII Corps on the 28th and transferred north to the front line in an area known as "the Island," a three-mile strip of land between the Lower Rhine and the Waal.

Due to the heavy casualties absorbed during Market Garden, the British were sorely pressed for troops, and both the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions found themselves in positions that resembled the static trench lines of World War I. They were regularly subjected to artillery duels between British and German guns. There were also sharp firefights.

On the night of October 5, a platoon of Company E, 506th PIR, supported by a detachment from Company F, mauled two companies of German SS troops attempting to infiltrate American lines in support of an attack by the 363rd Volksgrenadier Division. Captain Richard Winters, who had earned the Distinguished Service Cross in Normandy and now led Company E, commanded his 35 men brilliantly, demonstrating bravery and coolness under fire.

Moving along a road adjacent to a dike near the banks of the Lower Rhine, Winters shot a German who was only three yards away and then opened up on a large mass of enemy troops. "The movements of the Germans seemed to be unreal to me," he reflected. "When they rose up, it seemed to be so slow, when they turned to look over their shoulders at me, it was in slow motion, when they started to raise their rifles to fire at me, it was in slow, slow motion. I emptied the first clip [eight rounds] and, still standing in the middle of the road, put in a second clip and, still shooting from the hip, emptied that clip into the mass."

Winters remembered that particular fight as the "highlight of all E Company actions for the entire war, even better than D-Day, because it demonstrated Easy's overall superiority in every phase of infantry tactics: patrol, defense, attack under a base of fire, withdrawal, and above all, superior marksmanship with rifles, machine gun, and mortar fire."

The 101st Airborne Division held its positions on the Island until late November, when it was withdrawn to Camp Mourmelon, outside the French village of Mourmelon-le-Grand. From the Market Garden drop until its last troopers were relieved, the 101st had spent 72 days in combat areas. In addition to its Market Garden losses, the defensive fighting at the Island cost the Screaming Eagles another 1,682 casualties.

The men of the 101st had experienced combat for the first time on D-Day. They had fought gallantly as tough, combat-wise veterans in Holland. However, their sternest test and their finest hour were yet to come during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 at the Belgian crossroads town of Bastogne.

While considering the role his 82nd Airborne

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Division was assigned in Operation Market Garden, 37-year-old Brig. Gen. Gavin understood a few things clearly. His division would attempt to take each of its objectives in a single day. The 82nd would also hold these objectives for at least 36 hours since relief from XXX Corps could not realistically be expected until sometime late on September 18.

Further, Gavin could easily see from maps that the terrain surrounding the towns and bridges that were critical to the offensive were dominated by a triangular ridgeline running from just southeast of Nijmegen past a resort hotel called the Berg en Dal through the towns of Wyler, Groesbeek, and Riethorst along the Maas River. Roughly eight miles long and 300 feet high, the ridge provided a clear view and fields of fire for a tremendous distance. It terminated to the east along the Dutch-German frontier, disappearing into the deep, almost impenetrable forest of the Reichswald.

Giving priority to the high ground, Gavin and General Browning, who served as deputy commander of the First Allied Airborne Army, initially agreed that all other objectives should be taken before securing the Nijmegen bridge over the Waal. Later, Gavin concluded that he could spare a single battalion to take a stab at the bridge before the Germans reacted in force.

Gavin ordered Colonel Roy E. Lindquist, commander of the 508th PIR, to send the single battalion against the span at Nijmegen while the rest of the regiment secured six miles of the ridgeline from Nijmegen south to Groesbeek. The 508th was also to assist in the capture of bridges across the Maas-Waal Canal at Hininghutje and Hatert, cut the approaches from the north, and safeguard the glider-landing zone south of Wyler.

Colonel William E. Eckman's 505th PIR was primarily tasked with capturing Groesbeek and the ridgeline south to the town of Kiekberg at Hill 77.2 and securing the second glider-landing zone. Meanwhile, Colonel Reuben Tucker's 504th PIR was to capture the big bridge across the Maas River near the town of Grave, capture the bridges over the Maas-Waal Canal at Malden and Heumen, and prevent the Germans from shuttling troops between the Maas and the Maas-Waal Canal.

Encountering light resistance around the drop zones, the troopers of the 82nd Airborne moved out. The capture of the Grave bridge was eased unexpectedly when 16 troopers of the 504th aboard a single C-47 were delayed a few seconds in jumping. When the green light was illuminated, Lieutenant John S. Thompson, commanding the stick, noticed the plane was above a cluster of buildings. He decided to hold off a moment and attempt to come down in a nearby field.

ABOVE: A paratrooper of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division has just released his parachute harness and is running toward an assembly area, while another, in the foreground, has just landed. The parachutes of many other American troopers billow in the distance as Operation Market Garden begins. OPPOSITE: As a column of XXX Corps vehicles comes under attack by the Germans on the road between Eindhoven and Nijmegen, British ground troops take cover in a ditch along the roadside. Eventually, tanks and Royal Air Force Hawker Typhoon fighter bombers were called in to break the German resistance.

After Thompson's men parachuted, they came to earth just 700 yards off the southern end of the bridge. With the rest of the 504th over a mile away, Thompson acted quickly. Dashing through sporadic rifle fire and crouching in drainage ditches, the troopers blasted a flak tower mounting a 20mm gun with a pair of bazooka rounds, cut wires to demolition charges, and took control of the southern end of the bridge.

On the other bank of the Maas the remainder of Thompson's battalion moved toward the Grave bridge, shrugging off fire from a single flak gun near the water's edge. One of the principal objectives of Market Garden was secured in just three hours. American patrols sent into Grave found that the Germans had pulled out. The townspeople were celebrating with the popular tune "Tiperrary."

Commanding a battalion of the 504th PIR, Major Willard E. Harrison sent single companies to seize bridges over the Maas-Waal Canal at Malden and Heumen. At Heumen, the Germans poured rifle and machine-gun fire from an island in the canal, but eight men crept forward to place covering fire on the island. Two officers, a radio operator, and a corporal rushed the bridge. One man was shot, but six more troopers rowed a small boat across the canal and joined the three who had survived the deadly run. When darkness fell, a reinforced patrol sprinted across a footbridge, overwhelming the Germans on the island.

Leading the company at Heumen, Captain Thomas Helgeson expected the Germans to blow the bridge sky high, but inexplicably it stood. Charges were spotted, and a demolition team cut the wires. Just as a squad of troopers reached the river at Malden, that bridge exploded in a shower of debris.

The bridge at Heumen later became XXX Corps' primary northward route. Troopers of the 504th and 508th found the bridge over the Maas-Waal Canal at Hatert demolished. When

more 508th men approached the last canal bridge at Honinghutje before daylight the next morning the Germans detonated explosives that failed to destroy the span but rendered it unusable.

One battalion of the 508th PIR set up roadblocks on the highway from Mook to Nijmegen to block any German move south, while a second occupied the northern end of the long ridge from the outskirts of Nijmegen to the Berg en Dal resort, a distance of three and a half miles. Light resistance was encountered in this effort, and the following day the battalion cut the Kleve-Nijmegen Highway with the occupation of the village of Beek at the base of the ridge.

Lieutenant Colonel Shields Warren, Jr., led the 1st Battalion, 508th in the quick strike at the highway bridge across the formidably wide Waal at Nijmegen. An apparent misinterpretation of Gavin's order, which the general later remembered as instructing a battalion to advance on the big bridge "without delay after landing," led Colonel Lindquist to rely more directly on the original plan to secure other objectives prior to any move against the highway bridge across the Waal.

Lindquist ordered Warren to organize defensive positions at De Ploeg, a suburb of Nijmegen, establishing communications with other positions around the Berg en Dal. More than three hours were required for Warren to pull his troops together and reach De Ploeg. By the time the first assignment from Lindquist was completed it was 6:30 PM. Dutch civilians reported to Lindquist that only 18 Germans were standing watch at the southern end of the highway bridge, and the battalion commander sent a reinforced patrol consisting of his intelligence section and a rifle company into Nijmegen to assess the situation. Due to a radio malfunction, the patrol was unable to send any information to Warren until the next day.

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: An M4 Sherman "Firefly" tank, upgunned with the British 17-pounder gun, makes its way past three other tanks that have been knocked out by German guns. The narrow road that XXX Corps traveled toward Arnhem was hazardous due to heavy enemy resistance. BELOW: A German soldier drives a captured American Jeep while several SdKfz 250/1 armored cars are also shown laden with infantrymen who have hitched rides. Initially surprised by the Market Garden offensive, the Germans rallied quickly and fought back ferociously.

Gavin sensed an opportunity. He prodded Lindquist with a terse order "to delay not a second longer and get the bridge as quickly as possible with Warren's battalion."

Seven precious hours slipped away before a concerted effort to seize the Nijmegen bridge went forward. After a Dutch civilian offered to guide his battalion into town to meet with resistance leaders, Warren instead instructed Companies A and B to link up southeast of Nijmegen at 7 PM and follow the Dutchman to the bridge. Company A reached the designated point on time; however, Company B got lost along the way.

An hour later when he could wait no longer, Warren left a guide for Company B and set out with Company A toward the highway bridge. Advancing through the darkened streets of Nijmegen, the troopers cleared houses on the edge of town. Finding no Germans, they continued their stealthy approach until they reached the Keizer Karel Plein, a traffic circle in the center of Nijmegen. At approximately 10 PM, the staccato of automatic weapons halted their progress.

General Bittrich's insight was about to cost the Americans dearly. While the paratroopers took cover against the small arms fire, they heard engines roaring forward, followed quickly by squeaking brakes and the sounds of men jumping from trucks. The leading elements of the 10th SS Panzer Division had arrived in Nijmegen. The opportunity to capture the highway bridge against light opposition evaporated. Hours earlier, the Germans in Nijmegen numbered a few troops of inferior combat efficiency. These newly arrived SS men were battle-hardened veterans.

Company A tried twice to take the southern end of the bridge, and twice they were thrown back by counterattacking Germans. The effort to take the Nijmegen bridge on September 17 petered out. Gavin arrived and determined that the paratroopers were getting nowhere. He ordered them to "withdraw from close proximity to the bridge and reorganize."

A small patrol led by Captain Jonathan Adams, Jr., received word from the Dutch Resistance that detonation equipment for the explosive charges wired to the bridge was located in the nearby post office. Shooting their way past the guards at the door, the Americans burst

inside the building, destroyed what they believed to be the detonation equipment, and then found themselves cut off and unable to return to the traffic circle. With the help of resistance fighters, Adams and his men held off the Germans until they were rescued three days later.

The next morning at 7:45, Company G, 3rd Battalion, 508th was called from atop Hill 64, about a mile from the southern end of the bridge. Renewing the effort to take the span, Captain Frank Novak led his men through back streets on the edge of Nijmegen, somewhat shielded from the Germans. The troopers were greeted by smiling townspeople, who threw flowers and fruit to them. However, as the Americans got closer to the bridge the adoring throng dissipated.

The Germans had worked through the night to strengthen their positions around the traffic circle and waited. When the Americans approached, they opened with rifles, machine guns, 20mm flak cannons, and 88mm artillery. Novak sent his men through the withering fire, and the troopers advanced to within a block of the traffic circle before they were stopped. Reinforcements could not be sent without weakening the defenses along the ridgeline or jeopardizing the security of the glider landing zones, where planes were expected at any time. At 2 PM, Company G was pulled out of its hard-won position and returned to Hill 64.

While the Nijmegen highway bridge was firmly in German hands, at least for the time being, the gliders began to slide into their landing zones. The perimeters were thinly held, and German soldiers infiltrated from the Reichswald under cover of darkness, leading to pitched battles. During one of these, a company of the 508th PIR was surrounded temporarily, and stiff resistance delayed the 505th in clearing one zone of enemy troops.

Colonel Lindquist sent a company of the 508th to sweep the northern landing zone, and the eight-mile forced march from Nijmegen took the breath away from many of the already exhausted troopers. Nevertheless, they mounted a Hollywood-style downhill charge into the teeth of German small arms fire and flak guns depressed to discharge as antipersonnel weapons. When the battle reached a crescendo, the Germans finally broke and ran. Just as gliders began touching down, the paratroopers chased the last enemy soldiers away. They killed 50 Germans and captured 150 more at the cost of 11 casualties. Bad weather forced the postponement of the insertion of the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment set for the 19th.

American paratroopers along the corridor to Nijmegen consolidated defensive positions and held against German attacks here and there. Contradictory reports of enemy tanks in the Reichswald filtered through command posts. General Browning approved a plan to capture the bridge in a night assault on September 18 but then decided that holding the high ground to await the arrival of XXX Corps was the best tactic. Gavin cancelled the plan.

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ABOVE: After securing the large bridge at Nijmegen, American troopers of the 82nd Airborne Division guard wounded German prisoners. When their initial attempt to seize the bridge was delayed, the American paratroopers were obliged to fight against the German II SS Panzer Corps in the streets of the city.

Within hours of crossing the Wilhelmina Canal at Son, the vanguard of XXX Corps reached Nijmegen. A flicker of hope remained that the ground forces might reach Frost's men at Arnhem.

On the afternoon of September 19, Gavin conferred with General Sir Brian Horrocks, commander of XXX Corps, and described a plan that he believed offered the best opportunity to seize the highway bridge. "There's only one way to take this bridge," he had already briefed his staff. "We've got to get it simultaneously from both ends."

Gavin intended to send paratroopers across the Waal in small boats downstream from the highway bridge and a nearby railroad bridge that had been a secondary objective. Once on the northern bank of the river, these troopers would outflank the defenders of both bridges, forcing them to withdraw.

While the amphibious assault was underway, the defenders at the southern ends of both bridges were to be hit hard by combined elements of XXX Corps and the 82nd Airborne. The plan was fraught with risk, but while Gavin thought of his own men and the casualties they would likely absorb he also considered the plight of the beleaguered 1st Airborne at Arnhem.

It was imperative for XXX Corps to cross the Waal. At the same time, Gavin had been forced to divert troops from other sectors to Nijmegen, and prolonged fighting had reduced his strength along the ridgeline significantly. Two days into Market Garden, Company A, 505th PIR was down to two officers and 42 men.

While the amphibious operation was discussed, efforts to breach the German defenses at the bridges continued. On the afternoon of September 19, the 2nd Battalion, 505th PIR, under Lt. Col. B.H. Vandervoort, supported by a British infantry company and a battalion of Guards Armoured Division tanks, attacked the southern end of the railroad bridge. Some American paratroopers hitched rides atop the British tanks, and the direct assault was underway at 3 PM. Company D, 505th, commanded by Lieutenant Oliver B. Carr, began taking fire from the railroad marshaling yards about 1,000 yards from the southern end of the bridge.

Covered by supporting fire from the tanks and the artillery of the 82nd Airborne and Guards Armoured Divisions, Carr's men cut the distance to their objective in half but came under a hail of fire from enemy guns between the bridge and the railroad station. A shell from a German 88 slammed into the lead British tank and disabled it. Repeated efforts to renew the advance were fruitless.

At the same time, paratroopers, British infantry, and tanks hit the southern end of the highway bridge. When the attackers closed to

within 300 yards of the traffic circle, they split left and right into two groups. Simultaneously, German crossfire from the traffic circle and the streets that emptied into it began blazing away. On the left, Company F, 505th PIR inched ahead, but its supporting tanks were stopped cold by a log barricade. On the right, the British troops, Company E, 505th, and the rest of the armor advanced within 100 yards of the traffic circle before an antitank gun destroyed the lead British tank and three more were crippled in rapid succession. The assault stalled. Further attempts during the long afternoon were also repulsed.

For the fourth time, the Allies had been denied the highway bridge over the Waal. The Germans held firm at the railroad bridge as well. It seemed that mere yards might as well have been miles. As twilight shrouded the scene, the firing dissipated.

On the night of the 19th, Gavin ordered Colonel Tucker to detach two companies to defend the bridges over the Maas and Maas-Waal Canal. The remainder of the 504th PIR received orders to make the hazardous amphibious crossing at Nijmegen. The Americans failed to scrounge enough boats to make the assault, but the British offered a solution. Thirty-three canvas boats from the XXX Corps engineers could be brought up by mid-day on the 20th. Originally set for 1 PM, the attack was postponed for two hours when the boats were delayed in traffic.

While the area the amphibious assault would launch from along the southern bank of the Waal was cleared of Germans and the attack on the southern end of the highway bridge was renewed, strong German counterattacks from the Reichswald threatened the plans at Nijmegen. Although the 1st Battalion, 505th gave ground around the villages of Riethorst and Mook, Major Talton W. Long committed two platoons of infantry, his only reserve, and tanks from the Coldstream Guards of XXX Corps rumbled up to bolster new defensive positions. When the Germans had finally been thrown back, Long's battalion counted 20 killed, 54 wounded, and seven men missing.

To the north, two platoons of the 508th PIR were forced out of the village of Wyler, and troopers were pushed back near the town of Beek toward the Berg en Dal. The Germans missed an opportunity to slip around the Allied right flank and reach the outskirts of Nijmegen unmolested. The 508th fought throughout the next day to regain the lost ground.

As 3 PM on September 20, 1944, approached, Major Julian Cook and the 3rd Battalion, 504th PIR, prepared for one of the epic assaults of World War II. The flimsy canvas and plywood boats that would carry them from the vicinity of a power plant on the southern bank across the 400-yard breadth of the Waal River about a mile north of the railroad bridge were assembled. They reached the paratroopers only 20 minutes before the attack was to step off.

The boats were 19 feet long, and when they arrived the men counted 26 of them rather than 33. To deliver all the troopers slated for the first wave to cross the Waal these puny craft would be dangerously overloaded. The three engineers who rode in each boat were ordered to paddle back across the river for another load when the first men had reached the far side.

To support the crossing that was intended to outflank the Germans on the northern bank of the river and oblige them to withdraw from the bridges, a detail from another battalion of the 504th would join in the crossing while rocket-firing Hawker Typhoon fighter bombers would roar in to soften up the German positions. About 100 artillery pieces would fire a 15-minute preparatory barrage and lay a smokescreen to obscure the vision of the German gunners watching the paratroopers paddle across the choppy river like sitting ducks.

To effect the crossing in the face of heavy German small arms and artillery fire, the paratroopers would also have to contend with the swift current of the Waal, running eight to 10 miles per hour in some locations. The surrounding terrain was flat and open, and though Gavin had intended for the boats to load in a secluded area near the mouth of the Maas-Waal Canal, the current was so swift that it was necessary to load in the open. The barrels of German guns pointed at the men while observers among the tall steel girders of the railroad bridge watched their every move.

Seconds after the Allied artillery switched from high-explosive to white phosphorous shells, the wind began to sweep the shroud of smoke away. Little cover was provided. Carrying the assault boats on their shoulders, the paratroopers stepped into the shallow water at the edge of the Waal. Some slipped along the muddy bank and fell into the current. Others were mired in the muck of the bottom. Machine-gun bullets zipped into the water, tearing the canvas sides of the boats while 20mm guns at the railroad bridge barked.

Several boats were shredded. One was hit by mortar fire and capsized just 20 yards from the northern bank. Private Joseph Jedlicka went straight to the bottom of the Waal in eight feet of water but managed to maintain his wits, hold his breath and his Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), and walk to the shoreline where the scene was reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno* with smoke, fire, blood, and death everywhere.

Lieutenant Colonel J.O.E. "Joe" Vandeleur, commander of the 3rd Battalion, Irish Guards, was captivated as the drama unfolded. "It was a horrible, horrible sight," he later wrote. "Boats were literally blown out of the water. Huge geysers shot up as shells hit and small arms fire from the northern bank made the river look like a seething cauldron. I remember almost trying to will the Americans to go faster."

Major Cook, a devout Catholic, was in the first wave, paddling and loudly reciting the Hail Mary amid the storm of enemy fire. Half the boats were lost, but the engineers turned the remaining 13 back for another load. Eleven of them managed to run the gauntlet. The heroic engineers aboard these boats made six trips during the long afternoon, delivering the balance of the 3rd Battalion and then the 1st Battalion, 504th to the northern bank.

Those who survived the harrowing crossing set to work in small groups. Unit cohesion was nonexistent. Leaving more than 50 Germans dead along the riverbank, the first paratroopers sprinted across an open field to a roadbed lined with dikes about 800 yards from the Waal. They threw hand grenades and in hand-to-hand combat cleared the Germans out with bayonets.

Although they had become jumbled during the crossing, the paratroopers maintained the initiative, men following officers of different companies but working as teams to silence machine-gun positions and scatter defenders. The paratroopers came upon the German strongpoint at Fort Hof van Holland, which they had been ordered to bypass. Instead, they seized an opportunity to take it. Sergeant Leroy Richmond of Company H swam underwater across a moat surrounding the fort and motioned to his comrades to follow across a causeway. They rushed forward, taking out the machine guns and 20mm flak cannons firing at the Americans from the fort's towers.

While the attack pressed ahead, the Germans apparently never attempted to blow up either the railroad or the highway bridge. Men of Companies H and I reached the northern ends of both spans and loosed automatic weapons fire across them.

Finally, around 4:20 PM, the Germans at the traffic circle began to crack. Troopers of the 505th PIR and British tanks hammered their way through the streets and into the enemy perimeter to claim the southern end of the highway bridge. British tankers saw an American flag flying across the river and believed it was the signal to cross the highway bridge to the northern bank. The flag was actually at the rail-

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American paratroopers rush through the dirt and debris raised by the explosion of German 88mm shells following Operation Market Garden. When the initial effort to seize the bridge at Arnhem across the Lower Rhine failed, the American airborne troops remained in the Netherlands to support ground efforts, assaulting Arnhem in October 1944.

road bridge. The Americans on the other side were still some distance from the highway bridge. Nevertheless, four tanks started across the Waal, guns blazing, and three of them reached the other side.

At 7:10 PM, three privates of Companies H and I reached the northern end of the highway bridge to link up with the British tanks. The fight was over.

At the railroad bridge, Germans streamed back toward the northern bank of the Waal and became trapped on the span as Allied troops sprayed them with rifle and machine-gun fire. A total of 267 Germans were killed on the railroad bridge, and dozens of prisoners were captured.

Cook's 3rd Battalion paid a high price for the success with 28 dead, 78 wounded, and one man missing. In the extended fight at the traffic circle, the 505th had lost about 200 men. During Market Garden, the 82nd Airborne suffered 1,432 casualties. Major Cook survived the ordeal and later received the Distinguished Service Cross. General Horrocks mused that the 3rd Battalion's combat transit of the Waal was "the most gallant attack ever carried out" in World War II.

Allied commanders were puzzled as to why the Germans had not blown the key bridges. Courage and good fortune had, at long last, won the day.

Colonel Reuben Tucker was justifiably proud of his command, which had finally kicked open the door to Arnhem. However, as some XXX Corps tanks helped hold the lodgment on the northern bank of the Waal, the large armored column halted in and around Nijmegen. Running low on fuel and ammunition, the tankers were exhausted. Their infantry support, critical to the armored advance along the narrow, elevated road to Arnhem, had not come up yet, and daylight was ebbing away.

Tucker was dumbfounded. "We had killed ourselves crossing the Waal to grab the north end of the bridge. We just stood there seething, as the British settled in for the night, failing to take advantage of the situation. We couldn't understand it. It simply wasn't the way we did things in the American Army—especially if it had been our men hanging by their fingernails 11 miles away."

Frost's battalion lost its hold on the northern end of the Arnhem bridge across the Lower Rhine on September 21 and was driven back into the town. The Germans controlled the span and used it to move tanks, artillery, and SS troops to block the advance of XXX Corps toward Arnhem. The first effort to reach the trapped British paras progressed four miles but could go no farther. An airdrop of the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade was unable to establish a link with the bulk of the 1st Airborne at Oosterbeek and was under constant pressure from German artillery and infantry probes.

By the afternoon of September 20, Frost's contingent in Arnhem had ceased to exist as a fighting force. On September 25, the remnants of the 1st Airborne Division began filtering back from the northern bank of the Lower Rhine. Although Market Garden had ended in disappointment, some gains were achieved. The northern flank of the Allied armies was extended 65 miles across two canals and the Maas and Waal Rivers, while a considerable amount of Dutch territory had been liberated.

Although the two U.S. airborne divisions that had participated in Operation Market Garden were to have been released as soon as possible after their missions were accomplished, the 82nd Airborne, like the 101st, remained in the line for days. Its troopers successfully defended against attempts by the German II Parachute Corps to take the hills and ridges around Groesbeek, and elements of the division joined the 101st on the Island.

Senior commanders argued for the release of the airborne divisions, particularly since additional operations were planned near the end of the year, but the acute shortage of British manpower required that the Americans remain in the combat zone. Finally, on November 11, a full 55 days after their Market Garden jump, the 82nd Airborne began pulling out of the line. In addition to its casualties in Market Garden, the division lost 1,912 men while defending the highway corridor, the high ground, and the Island.

As the paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st were trucked down the roads they had fought to hold for nearly two months, Dutch civilians lined the streets in the towns and villages. Many of them shouted, "September 17!" To this day, they remember the heroism of all the Allied troops who sacrificed for their freedom and the bridges northward into the Netherlands.

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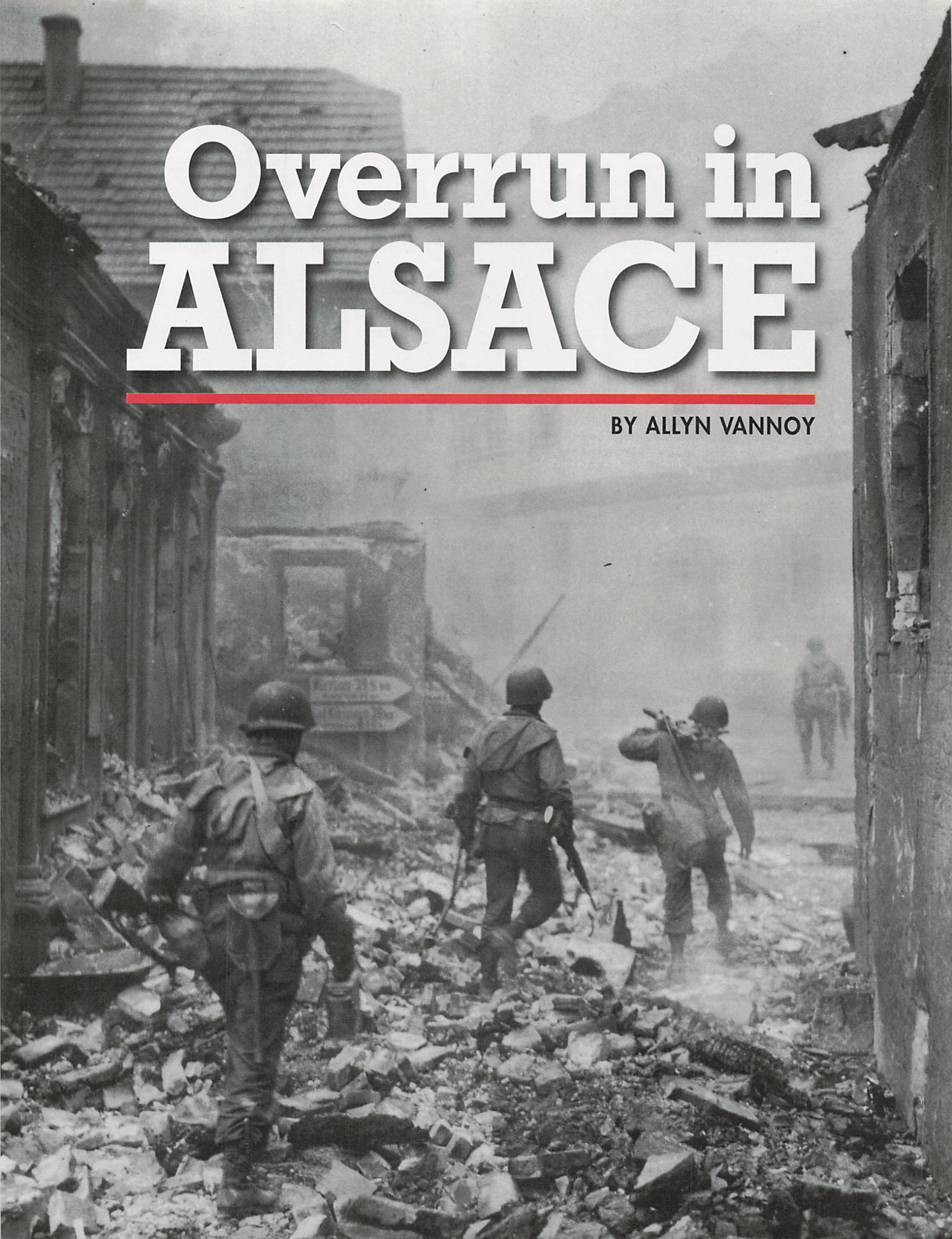
Overrun in ALSACE

BY ALLYN VANNOY



Like something out of a dream, a soldier walked into the command post. He unspooled a line of wire, hooked a field phone to it, checked the line, and handed the receiver to the officer in charge, Captain Howard Trammell, saying, "Someone wants to talk to you." Outside, the village was being rocked by mortars and gunfire that were ripping apart Trammell's company of armored infantrymen who belonged to Company C, 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion.

Trammell, commander of Company C, was a 24-year-old from Clay County, Missouri. Lacking money for college, he joined the National Guard in 1939 and was assigned to the 14th Armored Division at Camp Chaffee, Arkansas.

In late December 1944, Company C was part of Task Force Hudelson, which was led by Colonel Daniel Hudelson of Combat Command R, 14th Armored Division. The division comprised a mix of division and nondivision assets, including the 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion, the 94th Cavalry Recon Squadron (less Troop C), the 17th Cavalry Squadron, Company A of the 125th Armored Engineer Battalion, and Company B of the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion. The division also contained Company B of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, a detachment from the 540th Engineer Combat Regiment, and the 500th Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

The regimental-sized task force was deployed as part of Maj. Gen. Edward Brooks's VI Corps defense in depth across the Lower Vosges Mountains, arrayed along the French-German border. The task force's mission was to hold a section of the Seventh Army line connecting Maj. Gen. Wade Haislip's XV Corps and Brooks's VI Corps.

The men of Task Force Hudelson had stitched together an elaborate defense consisting of minefields, roadblocks, and barbed-wire obstacles at key points. They established outposts and strongpoints with fields of fire laid out and artillery registered on key target areas. They also echeloned reserve forces in depth, which were to stand ready to deploy forward to reinforce any hard-pressed sectors or block any breakthroughs.

Throughout December there had been a number of indications that the Germans were preparing to attack Lt. Gen. Jacob Devers's 6th Army Group to which Maj. Gen. Alexander Patch's Seventh Army belonged. The interrogation of German prisoners, reports of rail movements and arrival of new forces, aerial reconnaissance, and Ultra reports all combined to create the atmosphere of an impending attack.

Devers expected the attack to occur on either New Year's Eve or on New Year's Day. He was aware that the Germans had amassed upward of 15 divisions for an attack by Col. Gen. Johannes Blaskowitz's Army Group G. Seven German infantry divisions of fair to good quality were on the front line. They were backed by three panzer divisions that had been recently refitted. Three to five lower quality divisions also were available. Although not all would participate in the expected attack, it gave Blaskowitz sufficient reserves to carry out an offensive.

More than 10,000 volksgrenadiers ultimately participated in the Wehrmacht's offensive known as Operation Nordwind. The two heaviest blows struck Maj. Gen. William Dean's 44th Infantry Division in the center of Haislip's XV Corps line and the 645 troops of Task Force Hudelson on the left flank of Brooks's VI Corps. The lead elements of the assault against Task Force Hudelson, the 361st Volksgrenadier Division, would run straight into Company C.

The 62nd was put in the line from the town of Phillipsbourg to the village of Bannstein. Companies A and B occupied ground north of Philippsbourg; Company C was sent to Bannstein. Battalion headquarters was in Phillipsbourg. The battalion covered a nine-mile frontage—Company C holding five miles over twisting, heavily forested hills. The hills made radio contact extremely difficult, most communications being carried by jeep messengers or over field phones.

Bannstein was just three miles south of the German border and the Siegfried Line, astride the main road from the town of Bitche to Phillipsbourg, and 20 miles north of the Saverne Gap—the key passage through the Lower Vosges Mountains—through which Allied supplies and reinforcements had to pass to reach the upper Alsatian Plain and the French city of

A U.S. ARMORED INFANTRY COMPANY FACED THE FURY OF THE WEHRMACHT'S OPERATION NORDWIND ON NEW YEAR'S DAY 1945. ITS MEN HELD ON AS LONG AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE.

ABOVE: Soldiers of the U.S. Seventh Army move past a roadblock cleared by engineers in a forest in the Alsace region of France. The Seventh was stretched thin at the time of Nordwind because it had to extend its northern flank to cover ground previously held by the Third Army, which counterattacked German forces during the Battle of the Bulge. OPPOSITE: The men of Company C of the 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion stationed in the village of Bannstein fought desperately to buy time for Maj. Gen. Edward Brooks's VI Corps when attacked by lead elements of the 361st Volksgrenadier Division in the opening hours of Operation Nordwind.

Both: National Archives

Strasbourg. Seizure of the pass was vital to German strategy in Operation Nordwind.

Company C was deployed with Company B to its right and the 94th Cavalry Squadron on its left. The company's 1st Platoon was set on the left flank, to the north of the village across the Bitche road, and the 2nd Platoon on the right along the eastern edge of a small lake—Etang du Hanau. The company command post (CP) was placed in a large hotel in the village proper and under the command of 2nd Lt. Roland Adcox. Third Platoon, acting as a reserve, was housed in the village.

Though of limited effectiveness against German tanks, the five 57mm guns of the company's antitank platoon, under Lieutenant Franklin Roesch, were sighted to cover the roads into Bannstein.

Company C was operating, like many American units, at less than full strength—short 35 men. But even if given a full compliment of 245, including cooks, mechanics, and drivers, each man would have been responsible for 108 feet of frontage. However, following the standard practice of having one platoon in reserve and two on the line, the frontage per man was closer to 240 feet. Taking into account the terrain and the winter conditions, such an area was impossible to cover. Therefore, the line platoons were assigned to key strongpoints and putting out listening posts. Positions were well dug in and reinforced with mines and trip flares.

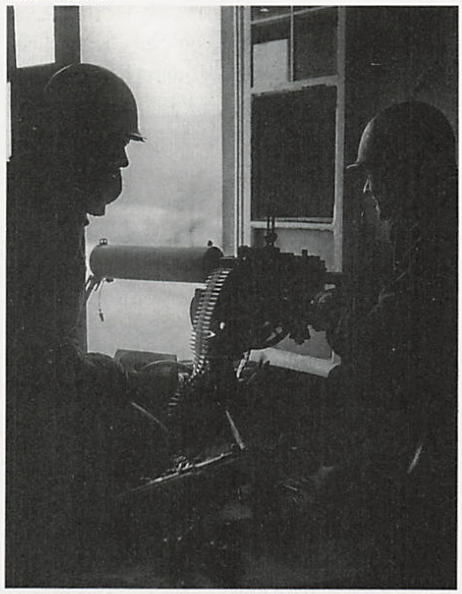
The area around the village was heavily forested with steep, high ridges that ran in a north-south direction. The roads in the vicinity followed the forest valleys, affording numerous places for roadblocks as well as ambushes.

Given the terrain and thinly held front, circumstances provided opportunities for the Germans to infiltrate, cut communications, block support routes, and isolate American units. The seriousness of the situation was exemplified one morning when Pfc. Boyce Nichols, on sentry duty at the company CP, reported that two German soldiers had been able to walk right down the main road and up to the CP to surrender without being challenged by any of the outposts.

An unusual quietness hung over the sector on New Year's Eve. The ground was covered with snow, and the moon made it possible to see men moving about. Hudelson's armored infantrymen were scheduled to be relieved the following day by elements of the 70th Infantry Division, but the German offensive derailed those plans.

The German assault came without a preliminary artillery bombardment. At three minutes before midnight, 1st Platoon's Sergeant Robert Highsmith, Private Gene J. Wacht, and Technician Fifth Grade Roy M. Gahagan were on outpost duty when they spotted a column of German soldiers marching down the Eguelshardt road. They were amazed to see the Germans marching four-abreast in parade ground fashion. Highsmith alerted his platoon sergeant, John W. Pleacher, Jr., and was told to stay put and that Pleacher would be up to take a look. But before Pleacher could come forward, an estimated two companies had bypassed Highsmith's position. Hearing firing coming from the direction of Bannstein, the trio headed for the village. They noticed several Germans following them, but the Germans did not fire on the three, apparently thinking they were friendly. As the trio neared the village they began to receive machine gun fire from American positions but managed to reach the village unscathed.

National Archives



ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

ABOVE: A U.S. machine-gun crew takes cover in a building during house-to-house fighting similar to that experienced in Bannstein. RIGHT: German volksgrenadiers in winter camouflage spread out as they advance through the fog during Operation Nordwind. The goal of the German offensive was to break through the U.S. Seventh Army's line and destroy its forces.

Trip flares were going off all over the area; the woods around Bannstein seemed to be full of Germans. The GIs in the outposts and strongpoints soon became engaged in a series of deadly firefights. Action developed into a swirling fight as both sides became mixed with little idea of who was friend or foe.

The leader of the 1st Squad, Staff Sergeant Edward Faytak, and his men were deployed in an outpost on the 2nd Platoon's right flank, east of Etang du Hanau, near a villa where the platoon's CP had been established. Faytak's squad was short three men at the time. They had set up in a crawl space under a small stone building. They also had dug foxholes about 100 yards from the building facing the woods. The villa CP was to their rear, the lake to their left, and the woods and hills were in front and to the right of the foxholes.

The Germans, dressed in white snow suits, screaming and yelling, assaulted repeatedly, each time rushing forward firing their automatic weapons.

The Germans came through the dense forest bypassing elements of the 1st Platoon, under 2nd Lt. Robert Warbritton, and began firing across the open ground between the forest and the village.

In Bannstein, service and support personnel were on edge. Little information was coming from the frontline platoons, and firing, both German and American, was occurring almost within the village. Between bursts of fire the silence was punctuated by a lone German voice calling out, "Doctor."

The 3rd Platoon, led by 1st Lt. Edwin M. Kosik, was situated in a *gasthaus* (inn) on the main northwest-southeast road from Bitche to Philippsbourg. Pfc. Robert W. Buntin and a number of others of the 3rd Platoon took up a defensive position in a crater to the right rear of the *gasthaus*. Just to the right of the crater, Technician Fifth Grade William H. Siewert manned a .50-caliber machine gun on his halftrack. Siewert was assisted by Private Joseph "Chief"

Poneyestewa, a Hopi Indian from Arizona. Siewert received a head wound, and along with Poneyestewa, was eventually taken prisoner.

Trammell spent most of his time throughout the night trying to maintain contact with his platoons and giving reassurances to the surrounded 1st Platoon CP, with whom he was in radio contact, that he intended to relieve them.

During the attack, Staff Sergeant Augustine C. Bojorquez was alone in his mortar squad half-track when he saw about 30 Germans attempting to work their way up a nearby draw. Using the mortar tube and sighting over the barrel, with the tube end on the ground between his feet, raising and lowering the tube angle to get the range, he placed several rounds on the Germans, stopping them. During the action Bojorquez had the heel of his boot shot off but kept on firing. He would receive a Silver Star for his valor.

Before daylight the Germans managed to successfully infiltrate portions of the village, taking a house between the company CP and Bannstein proper, isolating the CP except by field phone.

Staff Sergeant John Lillich, one of 3rd Platoon's squad leaders, holed up in the *gasthaus*, reported that daylight revealed that the Germans had suffered a large number of casualties.

Shortly after daybreak, Trammell received a call from the battalion commander, Lt. Col. James H. Myers. Trammell told Myers that his company was being cut to pieces. Myers instructed Trammell to withdraw his men and rejoin the battalion at Philippsbourg.

Carrying out this order would first require breaking contact with the Germans—not an easy proposition—regrouping, then taking a circuitous route to Philippsbourg since the main road had been cut.

Trammell said that if he could withdraw his company into Bannstein and occupy the high ground to the rear or south of the town while Myers sent him reinforcements and ammunition he might be able to hold for a while longer.

Communications were then lost with battalion. Shortly afterward, following repeated attempts to contact the 1st and 2nd Platoons and order them to withdraw to Bannstein, Trammell directed 1st Sergeant Bob Holmes to gather everyone in the CP, take the headquarters half-track and jeep, and head south. The captain would remain at the CP and try to establish a defensive line with the available forces in the village. Holmes was also told to guide any reinforcements he came across toward the CP.

At dawn, Sergeant Lillich spotted German tanks and half-tracks coming down the road from the north. Having received no orders, Lillich and the other GIs took it upon themselves to pull back from their positions. Lillich, who was carrying a bazooka, fired three rounds at one of the German tanks. Although he hit the tank, the rockets did no damage. Right after Lillich fired his last rocket, the building which he had been behind was demolished by shellfire.

Back at the company CP, Trammell continued his efforts to contact the 1st and 2nd Platoons. During this time the CP was hit by intermittent mortar shells and small-arms fire.

Though under increasing pressure, the company was still managing to hold out.

It was late morning when Corporal Bernard Flotkoetter, Battery C, 500th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, unexpectedly came through the door of the CP unrolling a spool of telephone wire. The corporal hooked a telephone to it, tested it, and then handed it to Trammell saying there was someone who wanted to talked to him. It was Lt. Col. Dale Swanson, commander of the 500th. Swanson told Trammell that he was placing his battalion in direct support of the captain, that he had his guns ready, and was asking for targets. Also, through the 500th's switchboard, Trammell could now relay communications back to the battalion.

Acting as artillery forward observer, Trammell placed several concentrations of fire in front of the positions of the 1st and 2nd Platoons. Then he received a call from Staff Sergeant Phipps, who was still at his 1st Platoon outpost. Phipps reported that he was observing a column of German soldiers coming down the road from Eguelshardt. This information, along with map coordinates, was relayed to Swanson, whose

artillery then struck the area.

When the action had started, Staff Sergeant Jimmy Long of the 1st Platoon took most of his squad, except Pfc. Frank Caldwell and two other men, into the woods to meet the German assault. Long was killed immediately after entering the forest. As Caldwell and the other two men came forward they ran into their platoon leader, Staff Sergeant Bill J. Bradley, Jr., who ordered them to stay with him.

Bradley had taken charge of the platoon when Lieutenant Warbritton went into a cellar and stayed there, apparently having lost his nerve. Bradley then led the group to a house where eight other members of the platoon were holed up.

As the attack broke over Company C, the 1st Platoon CP was immediately surrounded and cut off. Two squads attempted to break through to the CP but were pinned down. Pfc. Joseph Knapp was hit twice in the stomach by fire from a burp gun, crawled 300 yards to Bannstein, and managed to survive the day.

Near the surrounded CP, the Germans set fire to a building in which one of the Company C men lay wounded. His screams could be heard above the gunfire. Technician Third Grade James T. Hedderman ran through artillery and small-arms fire, rescued the man, and carried him back to the CP, where he received treatment. Hedderman, listed as missing in action afterward, was liberated months later by the 14th Armored Division at the Hammelburg POW camp.

Sergeant John Pleacher managed to get some of the men out of the 1st Platoon CP and infiltrated through the German lines to bring them back to Bannstein. For his actions Pleacher received a battlefield promotion and was awarded the Silver Star.

Just before daylight, Trammell received a call from Bradley asking for instructions. Trammell told Bradley he was going to lay artillery fire and smoke in front of his position so that his men could try to break contact and fall back. But Bradley's group was unable to break free as German armor and infantry began closing in on the position, forcing them to surrender.

When the 2nd Platoon began to fall back from its position by the lake, the Germans moved in behind them.

Faytak's squad, 2nd Platoon, had been overrun during the initial attack. Those that could retreated past the villa CP and headed for the woods. As they fell back, Faytak found that every time he fired someone would return fire. Not certain if it was friend or foe, he shouldered his M1 rifle and took a trench knife from his boot as he moved from tree to tree. Anything in white in front of him he struck at since the Germans were the only ones wearing white. Faytak was wounded during an encounter with six or seven Germans and left for dead by his comrades. He was eventually captured and his wounds treated.

In Bannstein, the infantry attacks having been repulsed with the aid of the 500th Armored Field Artillery, a quiet calm settled over Company C, except for an occasional exchange of sniper fire. About noon, though, German tanks entered the north end of the town and began methodically working over the buildings one by one.

While Company C was fighting for its life, task force commander Hudelson tried to organize his few reserves to aid Trammel. The only outfit not yet committed, Company A of the 125th Engineers under Captain Robert Knight, was ordered into action south of Bannstein.

As the engineers moved forward they came across abandoned equipment and bodies.

The lead squad ran into an ambush. Sergeant William Godfrey's half-track was either hit by a rocket or struck a mine and Godfrey was knocked out. When Godfrey regained consciousness, he found his half-track turned on its side. He had been stripped of his coat and shirt, and his legs were pinned beneath the five-ton vehicle. Around him were four other members of his squad, naked and dead. Next to Godfrey was a GI with a bullet hole between his eyes. Farther up the road he could hear Germans and the sound of digging. Although freezing and in pain from his wounds, he found his trench knife and began digging to free his legs. Once free, he managed to struggle back to his own lines.

After the ambush nearly a third of Company A's engineers had vanished, and many others were wounded. So much for relief efforts by the engineers.

Trammell called on 1st Lt. Edwin Kosik, with whom he still had contact by phone, and ordered him to pull back through Bannstein. Kosik was to move to the wooded high ground south of Bannstein, bringing all the personnel out of the village with him. Trammell told Kosik that he would join him there.

Because the building that housed the company CP sat apart from most other buildings of the town, and since German troops occupied a house between Trammell and the village proper, he could not move there directly. Trammell also did not want to leave the CP until the last possible minute because there was a chance

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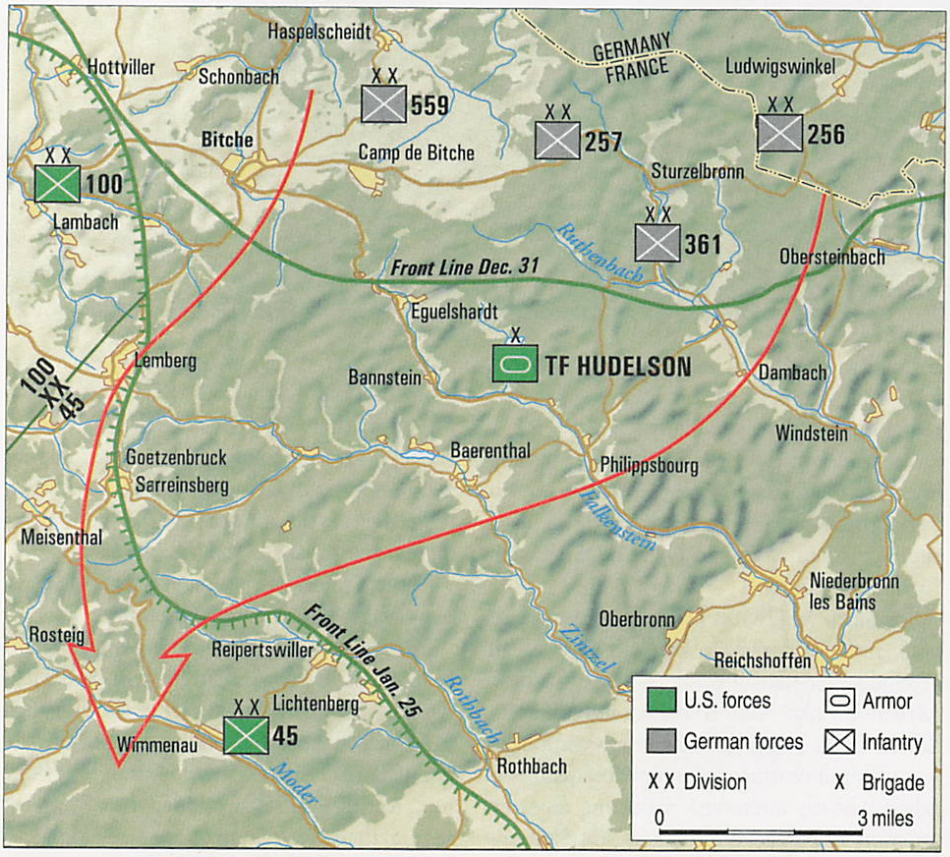

The men of Task Force Hudelson of Combat Command R of the 14th Armored Division found themselves directly in the path of the German advance in Operation Nordwind.

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ABOVE: Company C of the 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion had five 57mm guns with which to cover the roads leading into Bannstein. Every weapon available was used in an attempt to slow the Germans. LEFT: The survivors of Company C retreated to safety over snow-covered ridges in the forests south of Bannstein under protective fire provided by U.S. field artillery.

that the 2nd Platoon might pull back in his direction. He felt he might be needed there to intercept and deploy them. Also, the only means of communications the captain had with higher headquarters and supporting artillery was at the CP. He realized that the moment he left any chance for resupply and reinforcement would also be lost.

Before leaving to join the 3rd Platoon, Trammell made one last attempt to contact the 1st and 2nd Platoons, but to no avail. About this same time a German tank came down the road from the north and began firing at the CP. Just as Trammell left the building the tank fired and blew it up.

The 3rd Platoon, joined by the company's service and supply personnel along with a few men from the 1st Platoon, destroyed any supplies and equipment they couldn't carry and moved into the forest south of Bannstein. The 500th Armored Field Artillery laid a barrage behind the retreating men.

The GIs headed for the high ground, then turned southwest while under fire and closely pursued.

Trammell headed for the top of the ridge at the rear of the village, where he had told Kosik he intended to link up with the remnants of the company.

Immediately after Trammell entered the woods, a German machine gun or machine pistol began firing in the area between him and the ridgetop. The captain, therefore, veered off and continued down the road toward the town of Barenthal. By doing this Trammell hoped that he would either be able to rejoin his company farther south, meet the reinforcements he had requested, or find other friendly forces along the way.

When Trammell arrived at the road junction that led to Barenthal, he met up with friendly troops that had been ordered to pick up anyone from Company C and send them to Philippsbourg.

Those elements of Company C that had withdrawn from Bannstein to the southwest fought off continuous attacks. But many of the retreating GIs were cut off and forced to surrender.

One squad of 12 men under Staff Sergeant Phipps, west of the road to Eguelshardt, ran into a German patrol. The Germans looked at the American uniforms but did not react since many Germans had taken American uniforms from dead GIs. Fortunately, Phipps had with him Pfc. Frederick "Pop" Mittlestadt, ammunition bearer for the antitank platoon, whose father had been in the German Army in World War 1 and who spoke impeccable German. Mittlestadt stepped boldly in front of the German patrol and told them in an authoritative voice that Phipps's squad was on a special mission to go behind American lines and that was the reason for the American uniforms and equipment.

Mittlestadt added that since it was an important mission from the highest authority the German patrol was not to interfere. The Germans responded by letting them pass. Two days later, traveling at night without food and with only snow to quench their thirsts, Phipps and his men returned to friendly lines. For his actions Phipps received the Bronze Star.

Reaching Philippsbourg, Trammell was told to assemble the remnants of his company at the village of Zinswiller, about 10 kilometers farther south.

For nearly 12 hours the GIs of Company C, 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion, held up the advance of troops of the 953rd and 951st Volksgrenadier Regiments, preventing a German breakthrough.

Five days later, the morning report for January 6, 1945, showed the strength of Company C as four officers and 139 men. Two officers and 71 men were reported as missing. Despite these losses, in two weeks' time the company would be committed to one of the 14th Armored Division's fiercest actions of the war at Hatten-Rittershoffen. □

Fatal Pride at PELELIU

General William Rupertus's proud 1st Marine Division charged ashore at Peleliu on September 15, 1944, expecting to cakewalk to victory. It would prove, instead, to be one of the costliest amphibious attacks in American history. **BY JOHN McMANUS**

Inside the shabby tent that served as his command post on Peleliu, a despondent Maj. Gen. William Rupertus sat on his bunk, slumped over with his head in his hands. As commander of the 1st Marine Division, he had expected to take the little coral-reefed island in the Palau chain in a mere three days' time. He had even been foolish enough to communicate that optimistic expectation during a pre-invasion speech to his men. However, when his three regiments stormed ashore on September 15, 1944, they found a much different situation awaiting them than the one the general had described.

Rupertus did not know it, but at Peleliu the Japanese were unveiling a new strategy. Instead of defending the island at the waterline and wasting their strength on futile banzai counterattacks, they prepared an inland defense amid ideal terrain for such a holding action and resolved to bleed the Marines into nothingness. The new strategy, devised by Japanese premier Hideki Tojo and Lt. Gen. Sadae Inoue earlier that year, was based on the recent string of American successes in the Pacific War. Realizing that Japan simply did not have the resources to stop American advances indefinitely, the pair decided on a plan to make U.S. troops pay dearly for every island they took. Perhaps a negotiated peace was still possible, one that would lock into place previous Japanese conquests in China and Southeast Asia.

Tiny Peleliu, with its operational airfield, was designated as part of the Absolute Defense Zone, a last-ditch protective cordon safeguarding the Japanese home islands. Inoue handpicked an extremely competent and resourceful officer, Colonel Kunio Nakagawa, to take command of Peleliu's defenses. Arriving on site in April, Nakagawa had immediately set to work strengthening the six-mile-long by two-mile-wide island, which was shaped like a lobster's claw. The island's natural topography favored the defenders. While the suspected landing beaches on the southwestern end of the island were fairly level, an imposing chain of craggy hills, abrupt drop-offs, and steep ravines, known collectively as the Umurbrogol Mountains, dominated the center of the island. It was there that the majority of Nakagawa's veteran 10,000-man force would make its stand. The defense effort was given the optimistic title, "Palau Group Sector Training for Victory."

The Japanese strategy seemed to be working all too well. Despite three days of thunderous bombardment from four American battleships and various cruisers in Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf's Heavy Strike Force, the Marines had suffered 1,300 casualties on the first day of the invasion. In the following days, the fighting had grown even bloodier as the Marines attempted to take the Umurbrogol, which they nicknamed Bloody Nose Ridge. It was literally hellish work. "Along its center, the rocky spine was heaved up in a contorted mass of decayed coral, strewn with rubble, crags, ridges and gulches thrown together in a confusing maze," an after-action report explained. "There were no roads, scarcely any trails. The pockmarked surface offered no secure footing even in the few level places. It was impossible to dig in: the best the men could do was pile a little coral or wood debris around their positions. The jagged rock slashed their shoes and clothes, and tore their bodies every time they hit the deck for safety."

Major General Roy Geiger, left, and Major General William Rupertus, right, study a map in a captured Japanese building on Peleliu. OPPOSITE: Combat artist Tom Lea landed with the Marines at Peleliu and later tried to capture what he saw in a series of paintings. His painting The Two Thousand Yard Stare graphically shows the effect of fighting for Bloody Nose Ridge on one Marine.

Even under ideal circumstances in peacetime, the ground would have been quite difficult to traverse. "There were crevasses you could fall down through," Sergeant George Peto recalled. "It was a horrible place. If the devil would have built it, that's about what he'd have done." It was difficult to find cover, and the nature of the ground multiplied the fragmentation effect of

mortar and artillery shells. "Into all this the enemy dug and tunneled like moles; and there they stayed to fight to the death," an officer in the 1st Marine Regiment wrote.

To the Americans, the Japanese cave defenses were unbelievably elaborate. According to one Marine report, they were "blasted into the almost perpendicular coral ridges. The caves varied from simple holes large enough to accommodate two men to large tunnels with passageways on either side which were large enough to contain artillery or 150mm mortars and ammunition." Some of the caves even had steel doors. All of them were well camouflaged, with nearly perfect fields of fire. Naval gunfire, air strikes, and artillery only had so much effect against these formidable hideouts. Only infantry and tanks could hope to destroy them, and this had to be done at close range, under extremely dangerous circumstances. It was a recipe for heavy casualties—if not outright disaster.

From the American perspective, the invasion of Peleliu had been snakebitten from the start. Ironically code-named Stalemate II, the seizure of Peleliu and nearby Angaur Island were aimed at protecting the right flank of General Douglas MacArthur's long-envisioned return to the Philippines. Disagreements had flared between the Army and Navy over the ultimate goal of the operation. Navy Admiral Chester Nimitz favored bypassing the Philippines altogether to strike at Okinama, Formosa, and the Chinese mainland. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was forced to referee the dispute, coming down on the side of MacArthur. Peleliu suddenly emerged as the red bull's eye in the center of America's Pacific map.

Changes in the time frame, command structure, and combined Army-Marine unit cooperation further hamstrung the operation, to such a degree that Nimitz's righthand man, Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, commander of the Western Pacific Task Force, recommended canceling the invasion of Peleliu altogether. For reasons never sufficiently explained, Nimitz overruled Halsey. The invasion continued apace.

Under the agreed-upon plan, the 1st Marine Division landed three regiments abreast on the southwestern beaches at Peleliu. The 1st Marine Regiment, commanded by Colonel Lewis "Chesty" Puller, landed on White Beach at the far left (or north) of the assault. The 5th Marines came in on the center at Orange Beach, and the 7th Marines landed farther south. From the outset, Puller's regiment experienced the most difficulties. Given the assignment of wheeling left and attacking the high ridges of the Umurbrogol, the regiment advanced only 100 yards from shore before striking the 30-foot-high ridge rechristened "the Point" by the Marines.

The true horror of the fighting was almost indescribable. The ridges were steep, so much so that some were little more than sheer rock faces, dotted only with fortified caves. The rocky, crevassed ground was so unstable that troops could not hope to keep their footing, much less maneuver in any coherent fashion. Under perfect circumstances, it would have been difficult to overpower such a formidable network of caves. Under these conditions, it was a veritable impossibility, even for the gallant Marines. One of Puller's battalion commanders, Major Ray Davis, who would later earn the Medal of Honor in Korea and command the 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam, referred to the Umurbrogol as "the most difficult assignment I have ever seen."

As was usually true in any ground attack, the riflemen led the way and faced the greatest dangers. They climbed the hills in small groups, supported at a distance by machine gunners and mortar men who generally fired from fixed positions. "As they toiled, caves and gulleys [sic] and holes opened up on them," a Marine, observing from the vantage point of a machine gun post, recalled. "Japanese dashed out to roll grenades down on them, and sometimes to lock, body to body, in desperate wrestling matches."

Many Americans were ripped apart by machine-gun bullets or fragments. Some died instantly. Others bled to death slowly while calling vainly for help. Lieutenant Richard Kennard, a forward observer with G Battery, 11th Marine Regiment, was just behind the lead troops, calling in supporting artillery fire, watching young infantrymen get hit. "War is terrible, just awful," he wrote to his family. "You have no idea how it hurts to see American boys all shot up, wounded, suffering from pain and exhaustion, and those that fall down, never to move again." Many times he came close to getting blown to bits by uncannily accurate mortar fire.

For the Marines, there was almost no way to avoid the accurate enemy fire. Anyone spending enough time on the ridges got hit sooner or later. Any movement drew fire. One tank platoon leader from the division's 1st Tank Battalion watched helplessly as his tank's supporting infantry squad was decimated by mortar fire. Later, with bitter tears streaming down his face, the platoon leader told his battalion commander: "We couldn't do enough for them. We couldn't reach the mortars which killed them like flies all around us." This was why, in the recollection of another tank officer, "the infantry inspired all who witnessed its indomitable heroism to do one's damnedest."

After only a few hours, understrength companies of 90 men were down to half that size. Privates were leading platoons. Squads consisted of a few fortunate stalwarts. "As the rifle-

All photos National Archives

Marines of the 1st Division move inland off the beach under heavy fire.

men climbed higher they grew fewer, until only a handful of men still climbed in the lead squads," Private Russell Davis, a member of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, wrote. "These were the pick of the bunch—the few men who would go forward, no matter what was ahead. They are the bone structure of a fighting outfit. They clawed and clubbed and stabbed their way up," Davis said. "The rest of us watched."

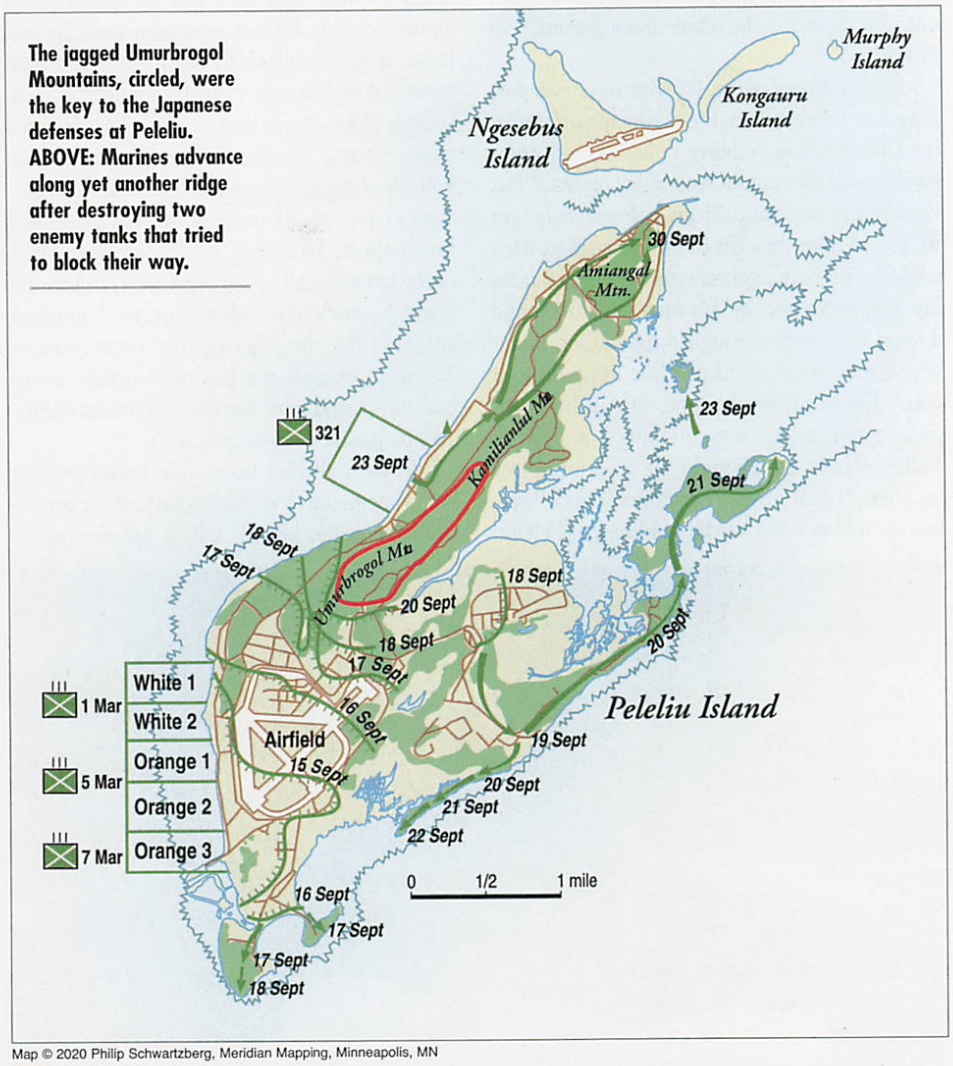
Because of the Golgotha-like terrain, the terrible casualties, and the chaotic confusion of the fighting, units lost any semblance of organization, deteriorating into little more than random groups of survivors. "There was no such thing as a continuous attacking line," wrote Lt. Col. Spencer Berger, whose 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines was also being chewed to pieces. "Elements of the same company, even platoon, were attacking in every direction of the compass, with large gaps in between. There were countless little salients and counter salients." Commanders measured gains in yards. Anything in triple figures was a good day's work. At night, Japanese infiltrators, sometimes operating in squads, counterattacked the fatigued Americans. The eerie ridges rang with the desperate, animal-like cries of men struggling to kill one another.

On the day of the invasion, Colonel Puller's 1st Marines had numbered 3,251 men. Even before attacking the Umurbrogol the unit had already lost 900 men. By September 21, after just four days among the ridges, the 1st Marines had taken only a few hundred dearly won yards of the Umurbrogol, at the cost of nearly 2,000 casualties. Companies were down to 10 men. Few platoon leaders or company commanders were still standing. Most of the sergeants were dead or wounded as well. Puller had culled out his rear areas of cooks, bakers, signalmen, litter bearers, and engineers to refurbish his line companies, but the Umurbrogol had consumed them too. The 1st Marine Regiment was being destroyed.

Puller, shirtless in Peleliu's 100-degree heat, was still carrying fragments from a wound suffered at Guadalcanal. The wound was infected, swelling his thigh to twice its normal size. He walked with the help of a rifle, a cane, or soldiers' helping hands. Already he was a legend in the Marine Corps, a fire-breathing combat leader who exemplified everything a Marine officer should be. He had come up through the ranks, serving all over the globe with the Old Corps of the pre-World War II era. Basically, he was to the Marine Corps what George Patton was to the Army—a colorful, unforgettable household name who embodied the aggressiveness of total victory. As with Patton, Puller believed in leading from the front. He was a warrior in the truest sense of the word (his detractors saw him as a "warmonger").

Diminutive and almost gnome-like, Puller always seemed to be wherever the action was thickest, talking to men, joking with them, inspiring them. His command post was usually close to the front lines, especially at Peleliu, where it was probably too near the fighting since his staff officers spent as much time taking cover as doing their jobs. To him, leading troops in combat was the highest calling. He had a special connection with enlisted men like Sergeant George Peto. At one point during the terrible fighting on Peleliu, Peto was feeling downcast, exhausted, and generally dispirited. Then he saw the colonel who greeted him amiably: "Hi son." Peto instantly felt better. "That encounter did more for my well-being than a good drink of cool water, which I was in bad need of. I would have followed that man to hell and that's exactly what we did at Peleliu."

Others felt the same way. Pharmacist Mate 3rd Class Oliver Butler, a young Navy corpsman in E Company, 1st Marines, had been struggling for days to save countless numbers of badly wounded men. As the sun set one night, he saw the colonel strolling the front lines as if out for an evening walk. Puller stopped at Butler's position and actually seemed to know him: "How are you doing, Butler?" Stunned and flattered, Butler replied: "I'm doing fine, Chesty, but we've sure lost a lot of men and I hope we get some replacements up here tomor-



The jagged Umurbrogol Mountains, circled, were the key to the Japanese defenses at Peleliu. ABOVE: Marines advance along yet another ridge after destroying two enemy tanks that tried to block their way.

Map © 2020 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

row." Puller seemed to understand completely. "I know, son, but hang in there and keep your eyes open and your ass down." Butler later wrote, "Among the reasons Chesty Puller's troops liked him and admired him was the fact that he was a leader who actually and personally led and the fact that his personal courage was never in doubt."

Inspirational though he was, Puller's leadership at Peleliu left something to be desired. His brother had been killed in another Pacific battle, and he burned with hatred for the Japanese, an enmity that perhaps took away some of his focus. He believed that the best way to win was through the pressure created by constant, unrelenting attacks. "He believed in momentum," General Oliver Smith, Rupertus's second in command at Peleliu, commented. "He believed in coming ashore and hitting and just keep on hitting and trying to keep up the momentum until he'd overrun the whole thing [island]. No finesse."

Some members of the 1st Marines never forgave him for the losses the regiment suffered at the Umurbrogol. "Chesty Puller should never have passed the rank of second lieutenant," Pfc. Paul Lewis later said of his colonel. Sergeant Richard Fisher thought of him as a tragic caricature of his own aggressive image. "All battles are 'training exercises' for men like Puller, and it was just another rung up his ladder. Puller was a man who could not live long without war." Captain Everett Pope, one of his company commanders, was anything but a fan of Puller, whom he thought of as a mindless butcher. "I had no use for Puller," said Pope, who would win the Medal of Honor at Peleliu. "He didn't know what was going on. The adulation paid to him these days sickens me." General Robert Cushman, who served as commandant of the Marine Corps, believed that Puller was a great combat leader who nonetheless could not understand anything except constant attacks, regardless of the circumstances. "He was beyond his element in commanding anything larger than a company—maybe a battalion—where he could keep his hands on everything and be right in the middle of it."

After six days of fighting, the 5th and 7th Marines had largely achieved their objectives, but the 1st Marines were still locked in a hand-to-hand fight with Japanese defenders on the Umurbrogol. The legendary Puller was partly to blame. In his mind, the Japanese were no match for his Marines. He would defeat the enemy by overwhelming them. Although this aggressiveness was generally laudable, at the Umurbrogol it did not serve him well. By and large, he simply hurled his regiment into frontal attacks with few adjustments and little maneuvering, "like a wave that expends its force on a rocky shore," in the estimation of one of Puller's officers. Chesty did this with utter, sustained ruthlessness and not much in the way of fire support. To be fair, he did not have much of the latter to call upon, especially artillery. He might possibly have sidestepped the Umurbrogol, working his way up the west coast of Peleliu to encircle the Japanese in their caves, but that would have left the beachhead vulnerable to Japanese counterattacks.

Still, with all that taken into consideration, Puller seemed to have little grasp of the impossibility of what he was telling his men to do. Day after day, he cajoled, threatened and coaxed his commanders into launching more and ever costlier attacks. When Puller ordered his 2nd Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Russell Honsowetz, to take a hill one day at all costs, Honsowetz complained that he no longer had enough men. "Well, you're there, ain't you, Honsowetz? You get all those men together and take that hill." Puller clearly wanted quick results regardless of the consequences. Amid the bloodbath, he simply would not admit to himself or anyone else that his regiment could not achieve the impossible. Nor did he have much appreciation for the challenging terrain. He even turned down an opportunity to fly over it for a better look, saying he had plenty of maps.

Sometimes positive characteristics can actually become a weakness. In this case, Puller represented aggressiveness, valor, and inspirational leadership, all ingredients that make the Marine Corps great. But he also demonstrated the tendency of Marine officers to overrely on these strengths to the exclusion of all else. His repeated, mindless frontal attacks were the American version of banzai—almost as costly, and every bit as fruitless.

At the Umurbrogol, Puller was only following the orders of Rupertus. To the general went the lion's share of the blame. "The cold fact," one officer wrote, "is that Rupertus ordered Puller to assault impossible enemy positions daily till the First was decimated." Puller might well have protested or demurred, but Rupertus probably would have relieved him. "It was more or less of a massacre," Puller later admitted. "There was no way to

ABOVE: Marine artillery goes into action in support of the infantry. LEFT: The grim rows of dead Marines attest to the carnage wrought by the savage fighting at Peleliu.

cut down losses and follow orders."

There seemed to be no end in sight to the carnage, and the longer it persisted the more heavily it weighed on the 54-year-old Rupertus, edging him toward a breaking point. A 30-year veteran of the Corps, Rupertus had once been a champion marksman (he even penned *The Rifleman's Creed*). In the 1930s, while stationed in China, he had lost his wife and two of his children to scarlet fever. By most accounts, he was never the same after that tragedy. He grew more reticent, withdrawn, and dour. Earlier in World War II, he had served as assistant division commander of the 1st Marine Division until being promoted to the top job in late 1943. He was aloof from his men and frosty with his staff, especially the able Oliver Smith, whom he treated like an unwanted disease. Rupertus was a poor judge of terrain and tactics. He was rightfully proud of the Marine Corps but allowed that pride to morph into fierce contempt for the Army and the supposed incompetence of soldiers. At Peleliu, his men paid dearly for his interservice chauvinism.

Rupertus was slow to react to the conditions on the ground. Denying the obvious reality that the battle would last longer than three days, he had dispensed unceasing orders to attack, particularly in the Umurbrogol. Because he had broken his ankle in a prelanding exercise, thus limiting his mobility, he was generally confined to his command post. Like some sort of latter-day chateau general, he had been spending much of his time on the phone, snarling at his subordinates to "hurry up" and capture the island. As the casualty numbers piled up, he seemed divorced from reality. One day, during the height of the 1st Marine Regiment's struggle for the Umurbrogol, a newspaper correspondent came back from the front lines and told the general how many dead Marines he had just seen. At first, Rupertus tried to deny it, but realizing that the reporter knew what he was talking about the general commented, "You can't make an omelet without breaking the eggs."

Now, sitting on his bunk, Rupertus looked at one of his staff officers and said, "This thing has just about got me beat." The general was thinking about stepping down and handing over command to Colonel Harold "Bucky" Harris, commander of the 5th Marine Regiment. But the staff officer, Lt. Col. Harold Deakin, sat down next to Rupertus, put his arm around his commander, and consoled him. "Now, General," he said, "everything is going to work out." Rupertus could only shake his head sadly and resume his brooding.

ABOVE: Marines blast away at Japanese defenders hidden in their caves. LEFT: General Geiger, back to camera, shakes hands with Colonel Lewis Puller at the 1st Marine Regiment command post. Brigadier General Oliver Smith is behind Puller.

The general's main problem was narrow-minded, self-defeating pride. The 1st Marine Division was part of the III Marine Amphibious Corps, under Marine Maj. Gen. Roy Geiger. The other unit under Geiger's command was the Army's 81st Infantry Division. Even as the Marines struggled to secure Peleliu, elements of the 81st had overrun nearby Angaur. By September 19, the division's 321st Infantry Regiment was available to reinforce the Marines at Peleliu. Rupertus knew how badly his division needed the Army's help at the Umurbrogol. Yet, for days he refused to even consider this option. He was absolutely determined that his division would take Peleliu alone.

Contemptuous of the Army, Rupertus would not ask for help from mere soldiers, even as his own men died in droves. "This reluctance to use Army troops was very noticeable to the Corps staff," Colonel William Wachtler, Geiger's operations officer, later wrote. "It is probable that he [Rupertus] felt, like most Marines, that he and his troops could and would handle any task assigned to them without asking for outside help." One Marine junior officer, writing to his family, put it even more succinctly. The brass, he said, "would never call in the Army like this, for it would hurt the name of the Marine Corps, I suppose, to let the world know that 'doggie' reinforcements had to be called in so early!!"

Geiger, however, thought differently. From D-Day onward, he was ashore at Peleliu. Brave and energetic, he roamed the battlefield, constantly gathering information on what was happening. He had a low opinion of Rupertus and had never gotten along particularly well with him. For several days, he watched as the situation at Umurbrogol grew worse. He considered relieving Rupertus but did not like the idea of firing a Marine division commander in the middle of a fight. Instead, on September 21, he finally took matters into his own hands after a visit to Puller's command post. Shirtless, with a corncob pipe in his mouth, Chesty limped around on his swollen leg while briefing the corps commander. Colonel William Coleman, a member of the corps staff, had the impression that Chesty was completely exhausted. "He was unable to give a very clear picture of what his situation was." Geiger asked him if he needed reinforcements and Puller "stated that he was doing alright with what he had." This was a crucial moment when Chesty could have asked for the help he so badly needed but, like

Continued on page 77

Expedition to MADAGASCAR

BY JOHN W. OSBORN, JR.

"THE FIRST I SAW OF MADAGASCAR AND THE LAST AFTER adventurous months ashore was the eerie color of the soil," a British novelist turned security sergeant would write a decade later.

"It gave to the sky, the vegetation, and the people a strangeness, even a deathliness which still shadows my recollections of the island. For the soil and the dust which rose from it to cake our skins and clothes, our eyelids and nostrils was not brick-colored or terra cotta but the color of dried blood."

Lying 240 miles off the southeast coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean, at 226,658 square miles Madagascar ranks just behind Greenland, New Guinea, and Borneo in size among the world's islands. But with a population in 1942 of just 3.4 million, it had one of the world's smallest densities, five persons per square mile. Only 25,000 were French, the rest a mixture of African with ancient arrivals from Malaya and Polynesia dizzyingly divided into 18 sub-ethnic groups such as the Antandroy, the "people of the bush brambles," and the Tsmimihety, the "people who do not cut their hair."

Though discovered by Europeans in 1506, its French rulers did not bother to take possession until 1897. Under the rule of Vichy collaborators, the island was ignored and isolated for most of the war; however, events in the Pacific brought it briefly into the action.

When he heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor in his London headquarters, the leader of the Free French, General Charles de Gaulle, asked an aide what he thought the consequences would be for France.

"The Indian Ocean becomes a major theater of operations, and Madagascar suddenly takes on strategic importance. The Japanese will try to seize it," the aide astutely answered.

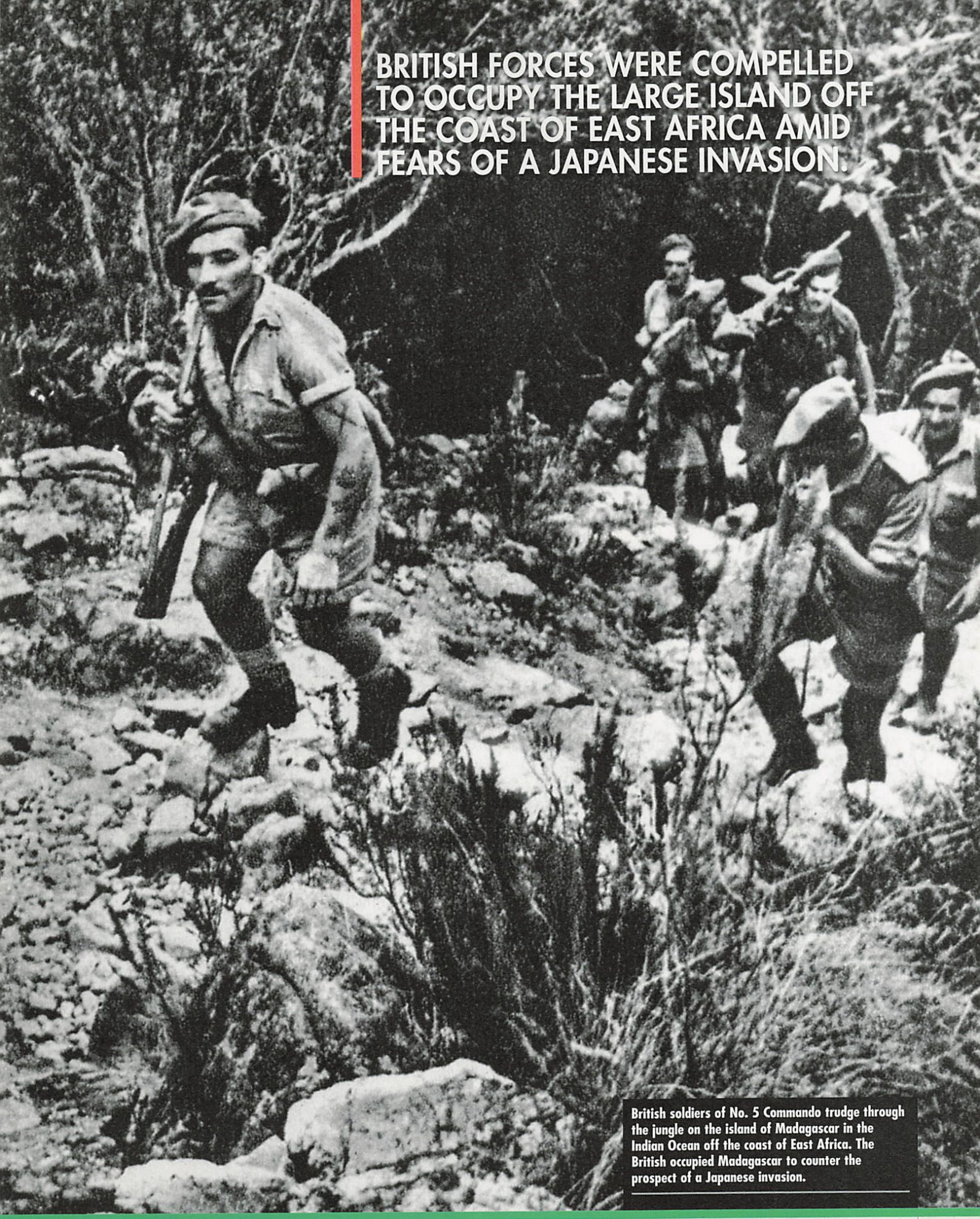
In Japanese hands, the magnificent harbor of Diego Suarez at the northeast tip of the island and the naval base a mile to the south at Antisare could choke off Allied supply lines to India and Egypt. De Gaulle appealed to the Allies to take Madagascar, but British Prime Minister Winston Churchill vetoed the idea. "Our hands are too full," he cabled President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and told his chief of staff, "Madagascar must still have low priority."

But then the Japanese captured Singapore and Burma. They landed on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal. With Ceylon threatened, the British war cabinet decided on July 12, 1942, to seize only Diego Suarez rather than all of Madagascar.

"The rest of the enormous island was of less strategic importance," Churchill later explained. "With the memories of Dakar in our mind, we could not complicate the operation by admitting the Free French. The decision was taken for a purely British expedition."

Churchill called the campaign for Madagascar "our first large-scale amphibious operation since the Dardanelles." Operation Ironclad got underway just 12 nights later, winter clothing seen loaded amid rumors of a commando operation against occupied Norway. Rear Admiral Neville Syfret commanded the aircraft carriers *Illustrious* and *Indomitable,* the battleship *Ramillies,* a pair of cruisers, nine destroyers, six corvettes, and an equal number of minesweepers. Maj. Gen. Robert Sturges com-

Alamy



BRITISH FORCES WERE COMPELLED TO OCCUPY THE LARGE ISLAND OFF THE COAST OF EAST AFRICA AMID FEARS OF A JAPANESE INVASION.

British soldiers of No. 5 Commando trudge through the jungle on the island of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean off the coast of East Africa. The British occupied Madagascar to counter the prospect of a Japanese invasion.

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: During the effort to gain control of the port of Diego Suarez on the island of Madagascar, British soldiers come ashore with their equipment on May 5, 1942. OPPOSITE: After coming ashore on Madagascar, British soldiers of the King's African Rifles assemble on the beach.

manded 13,000 troops.

"It was the nearest I would come to realizing a conception of 'adventure,'" Sergeant Rupert Croft-Cooke later wrote. He had already had his share of extraordinary experiences, working in a circus, traveling with a horse-drawn gypsy caravan, and wandering Europe in an old bus. The writer was now heading for the strangest of all.

The convoy rounded the Cape of Good Hope, spent five days docked in Durban, South Africa, to load supplies, then headed north into the Mozambique Channel separating Madagascar from the African mainland.

Facing the British would be 8,000 unenthusiastic local conscripts along with Foreign Legionnaires and tough Senegalese soldiers from West Africa. "We were told in a whisper that we had agents ashore keeping us informed of every defensive measure of the enemy," Croft-Cooke wrote. The top British agent on Madagascar since November 1940 was Percy Mayer, a businessman whose work took him all over the island, while his wife, much admired in what passed for society with her looks and piano playing, tapped out his messages to Durban in their bathroom.

"But," Croft-Cooke recalled, "when the last night came and we realized that in the small hours, the landing would start, the prospect, viewed in the tropical sunlight, suddenly seemed forlorn, uncertain of success, exceedingly dangerous."

The campaign for Madagascar opened at 4:40 AM on May 5, 1942, with the attack at Diego Suarez.

Fairey Swordfish and Albacore aircraft from the carriers bombed shipping at anchor in the harbor and destroyed most of Vichy's 30 aircraft on the ground, while the fleet shelled the town and paratroopers descended.

Caught in town, Percy Mayer rushed from his hotel room into the street. Unluckily for him, he ran right into a Vichy patrol. When he was searched, secret messages were located on him. He quickly found himself in a cell at Antisare's naval base, told he would be summarily executed, and was at least offered a priest.

Only the air strikes had been real. The naval bombardment had been star shells and signal rockets, light instead of heat, the "paratroopers" merely dummies. The real attack was taking place on the island's western side, at Courier Bay and Ambarata.

"Firing at night is not to be contemplated, the entrance to the bay being considered impossible," a French staff report confidently concluded. Royal Navy minesweepers were nonetheless able to skillfully navigate the shoals, reefs, and mines and then drop buoys for the troopships to follow.

Commandos and East Lancashire regulars proceeded to scale the 50-foot cliff overlooking Courier Bay. "We moved up to a gun position which we could see clearly in the moonlight," a Royal Artillery captain serving as a forward observer related. "Strangely enough, all was quiet and deserted, no sentries were posted, and no sign of life of at all. As dawn broke, we saw some buildings and went in to investigate. There we found the gunners all in bed."

There was little initial opposition. "In sweltering heat, loaded like pack mules with ammo and grenades, we marched against a hot wind across the 8-mile isthmus to Diego Suarez," one Commando remembered. When the Commandos and the Lancashire troops reached Diego Suarez at 4:30 PM they finally met bitter resistance.

Sergeant Rupert Croft-Cooke and the 29th Independent Brigade, in the meantime, had come ashore at Ambarate. He dragged his motorcycle to shore, kicked it to life, then joined the advance up the single, dusty road 21 miles east toward Antisare. "There was no sound of firing, no glimpse of the enemy," he wrote. "Ten miles or more distance were covered before we saw anything but red earth and florid vegetation."

"Soon after noon, the battle started," he continued. He had been traveling 20 yards behind the Bren carrier that the 29th's commander, Brigadier Fredrick Festing, was riding in. Known as Frontline Frankie, he was, as usual, hundreds of yards ahead of the column when firing suddenly broke out. The British rushed to cover behind the roadside trees and bushes. After five minutes, one of a half-dozen supporting Valentine tanks clanked up. As he walked toward it, Festing saw Croft-Cooke and yelled, "Been fired on much, sergeant?"

"No sir, not at all."

"I've got to speak to that tank," Festing said and started whacking the turret with his walking stick. More irritated than impressed, Croft-Cooke rode back down the road to rejoin his security section.

Festing drove the Vichy defenders back with armor, then a bayonet charge. Hours later, descending a hill and coming to a bridge across a stream, the British vanguard came upon a dilapidated corrugated iron building with a sign that said "Robinson's Hotel."

It was actually a store. "In every village of Madagascar, we afterward learned, there was a Chinaman's store, usually a tin shanty," Croft-Cooke recalled. It was quickly taken over as field headquarters for Festing and Sturges, with Croft-Cooke in charge of the guard detail. All the while, the ancient Chinese proprietor served tea, chattering in his unique brand of French.

Three miles from Antisare, the surprised British ran into a network of pillboxes and trenches the Vichy soldiers called the Joffre Line. Percy Mayer, still sweating out his appointment with the firing squad, had reported on it, but the information had never reached Sturges.

"The firing was now intense and from all

sides," Croft-Cooke related. "Our own artillery and the French 75s were audible in the universal racket of mortars, machine-gun and rifle fire." Festing threw in his armor, only to have it stopped by a 2,000-yard-long antitank ditch. The last four of the Valentines and two of the six light Tetrarch tanks making up the rest of the operation's armor were knocked out by artillery fire. Their crews leaped out and fought Senegalese soldiers hand to hand to reach safety. Festing recommended Captain Peter Palmer, killed trying to save his wounded driver, for what would have produced the campaign's only Victoria Cross, but he was instead awarded the Military Cross.

A long day came to a merciful end at 6:30 PM. "Now, it was deep night, and the crowded stars of the southern hemisphere shone brightly," Croft-Cooke wrote. To prevent snipers from crawling up in the darkness, the British set the surrounding grass on fire. "I watched the blazing hills and the black shapes of our men against them, and tried to realize that this was a battle, and not merely a rather fantastic night in a strange country."

Sturges prepared to launch a predawn attack, expecting "a good scrape which would end when we were at breakfast in Antisare." Actually, he was having his breakfast at 7:30, still at Robinson's. "It was quite clear that the attack had failed. It was an unhappy moment," he admitted.

There were more unhappy moments to come. Despite the fires, snipers got through—a naval signalman sitting next to Croft-Cooke fell forward without a sound, a bullet between his eyes. Then, Robinson's came under heavy artillery shelling, sending everyone but the Chinese owner dashing to cover. Sturges headed back to the coast to board Syfret's flagship *Ramillies* at 2 PM, "hot, begrimed, and unhappy," in Syfret's words, and requesting a diversionary seaborne raid against Antisare.

In less than 30 minutes, the destroyer *Anthony* was setting out to race 100 miles around Madagascar with Captain Martin Price and 30 Royal Marines. One of them was Syfret's valet, who begged to go, Syfret agreeing only with reluctance. He later admitted, "I did not expect a score to survive the night. The next hours were not happy ones."

Lieutenant Commander John Hodges took the *Anthony* into Antisare Bay in pitch darkness at 8 PM, hoping to make a surprise landing, but searchlights on shore came on. Hodges steadily maneuvered through a gauntlet of fire at 30 knots toward the docks. With no time to stop, he overshot the dock, reversed in by the stern while Price and his Marines jumped off, and then headed full speed back out to sea.

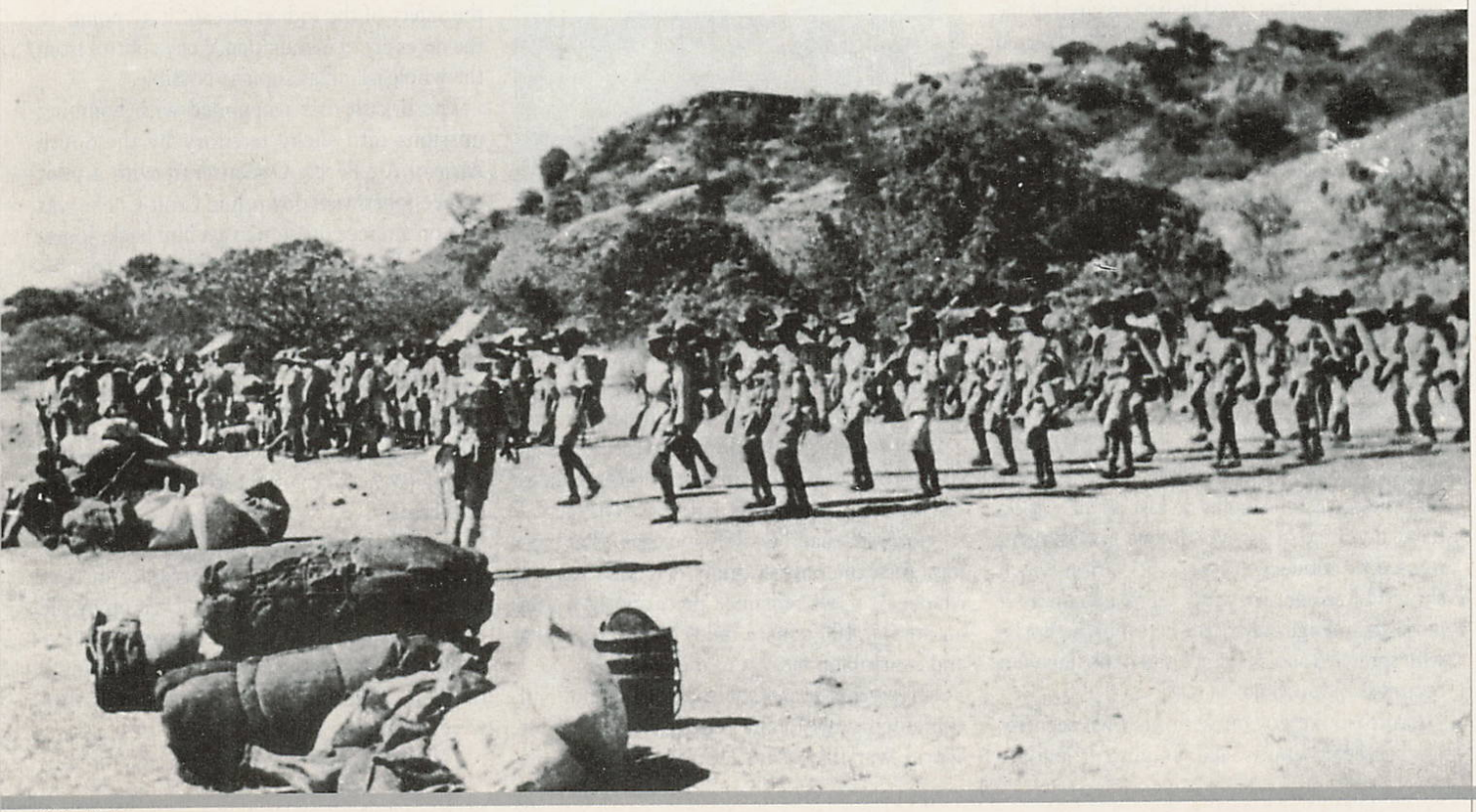
Price divided his Marines to seize objectives. Those rushing the gate at the naval depot where Percy Mayer was taken for execution came under rifle fire. Grenades tossed in response soon had the commander emerging with a white flag. A bugler beside him started to sound the ceasefire. The Marines, mistaking it for an alarm, knocked him down and then apologized. Inside, 50 British prisoners taken in the morning's failed assault on the Joffre Line were liberated, but not Percy Mayer. Luckily, he had not been shot: sensing defeat, the French had ostensibly paroled him.

Price armed the prisoners and soon had Antisare under control, and despite Syfret's fears, he had not lost even a single Marine. "This was a brilliant diversion," wrote Churchill. Price was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for it. Sturges ordered a final assault on the Joffre Line at 8:30. Phone calls from Antisare reported that Price's raid had broken Vichy morale, and at 11 PM, the burst of signal rockets illuminated the black sky, announcing that the Joffre Line had fallen.

The last holdouts in Diego Suarez gave up in the morning. "It was as though we had won a hard game of rugger, and neither team appeared to have any ill feeling," Price commented.

Rupert Croft-Cooke saw nothing sporting about the score in losses, for 105 British had been killed and 283 wounded, while Vichy French losses were 145 dead and 336 wounded. "There was little for triumph in our entry," he wrote. "We were angry at the idiotic obstinacy of the French, who had fought and killed many a good fellow. And why? Because an octogenarian marechal at home had ordered them to do so."

Another soldier was just as angry: Charles De Gaulle. He was in Washington, D.C., to mend relations with President Roosevelt when a reporter awakened him at midnight for a



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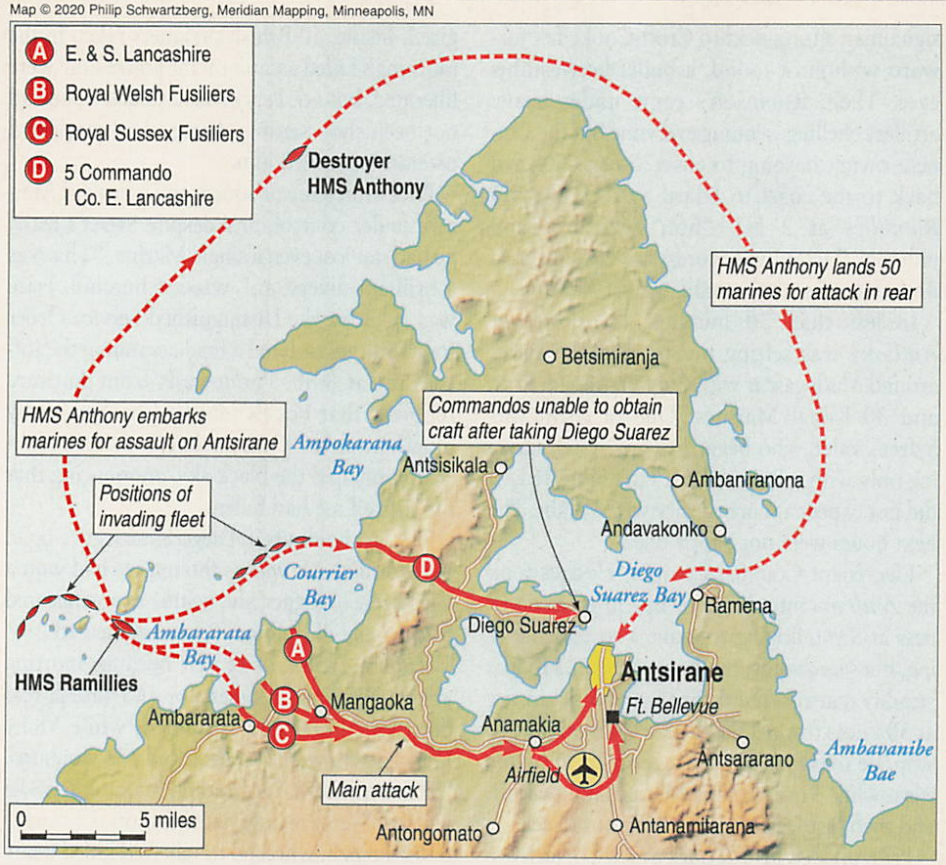


The prospect of a Japanese invasion of Madagascar threatened the security of British interests in the western reaches of the Indian Ocean and along the coast of East Africa. However, Vichy French resistance to the British occupation of the island resulted in some difficult fighting before Madagascar was secured.

comment—the first word he had received of the invasion. For the moment, the British preferred to deal with the local Vichy authorities. They would find them as hard to handle as De Gaulle, but for a different reason.

When the police, customs officers, teachers, and other assorted necessary functionaries were summoned to the town hall in Diego Suarez and asked by the British to continue working, they protested, one of them asking how it would endanger their pensions to, ironically, collaborate with the occupiers.

The British made the gesture of threatening to jail them so they could claim later they served under duress. Croft-Cooke, for one, could not hide his disdain for such people "who, thinking that their pensions might be lost or their good name obscured in the eyes of their government, refused to admit the one consideration which should have counted with a Frenchman as it did with an Englishman: the defeat of the Boche who sprawled across France and of the Jap who occupied Indo-China."

Croft-Cooke got on with his own security work, freeing imprisoned Gaullists, rounding up Vichy sympathizers for questioning, and starting a dogged pursuit of two German agents. He even governed for a while as an acting district officer. "I came to like the Malagasy, his innocent mendacity, his primitive timidity, his talent for storytelling, his indolence, courtesy, and sweetness," he later wrote.

In the meantime, the British left the French in control of central and southern Madagascar, to his irritation. He wrote in 1953, "One day, I suppose, we shall be told why it was that having taken the only strongly defended port in Madagascar, we remained precariously within an area of 100 square miles before attacking and controlling the rest of the island."

Three years before, Winston Churchill had explained why. In the fourth volume of his World War II history, *The Hinge of Fate*, he included a telegram to Admiral Syfret regarding Madagascar. "It must be a help and not a hindrance. It must be a security and not a burden. We cannot lock up field troops there for any length of time," it read. Syfret had, in fact, concurred. "I think, as far as our occupation of Diego Suarez is concerned, the French will adopt a policy of live and let live."

Before long, though, the Japanese again forced Churchill to change his mind, this time directly.

"We had settled down to life in that scruffy little seaport as though we would remain there forever," wrote Croft-Cooke. On the night of May 29, 1942, sudden explosions in the harbor shattered that tranquility.

Ramillies had a 20-foot hole blown it its side. An oil tanker was sunk. "Where had they come from? What did it portend?" worried Churchill.

It had been a Japanese midget submarine. Attempting to escape after doing the damage, it ran aground on a reef, the two crewmen swimming ashore to be cornered and killed two days later.

During the next two months, several more midget submarine attacks destroyed 34 ships totaling 150,000 tons. The (erroneous) assumption—the midgets actually launched from Japanese fleet submarines—was that the Japanese were operating from the ports still in Vichy hands: Majunga on the west coast, Tamatave on the east. The premier of South Africa, Jan Smuts, put particular political pressure on Churchill, cabling, "Madagascar is the key to the safety of the Indian Ocean. It all points to the necessity of eliminating Vichy control from the whole island as soon as possible."

The British first responded with bombing missions into Vichy territory by the South African Air Force. One aircraft with a pilot named Jones went down, and Croft-Cooke was sent on a rescue mission to get him back. Jones, though, had salvaged a machine gun from his wrecked bomber and was leading his crew to safety when they were suddenly faced with a French officer and 40 men.

"I must ask you, gentlemen, to consider yourselves my prisoners," said Jones, firing a burst from the machine gun into the air. The Malagasy accompanying the French officer scattered.

The Frenchman responded, "I surrender unconditionally." With his prisoner in tow, Jones reached the coast to be picked up by the Royal Navy. Croft-Cooke also found the German agents he was hunting. After receiving a tip, he nabbed them before dawn while they were sleeping in a hut.

"The west coast ports were needed for con-

trol of the Mozambique Channel where our convoys were molested by the U-boats. The governor-general remained obdurate. Further operations had to take place," wrote Churchill. In the end, the decision was finally made to occupy the remainder of Madagascar in a three-stage operation named Stream Line Jane.

Stream would be a landing at Majunga, followed immediately by Line, a march on Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, finishing with Jane, a landing at Tamatave. A convoy of reinforcements including the famed King's African Rifles (KAR) sailed from Mombasa to rendezvous in the Mozambique Channel with Croft-Cooke and the 29th Brigade on the night of September 9, 1942.

Another writer, Kenneth C. Gandar-Dower, was with the reinforcing troops that night. He had flown a rickety two-seater from England to India, later exploring Kenya and the Belgian Congo and publishing accounts of his exploits. The war provided him more opportunity for exotic adventure as a correspondent covering first the invasion of Ethiopia and now Madagascar.

"The world was dark and empty for us—and Madagascar," he wrote of that night at sea. "I did not know what lay ahead." What did lie ahead was an episode that would go down in British lore as the Battle Before Breakfast.

The invasion force appeared off Majunga at 3 AM. "Between the troopships, something was moving, a little black blob that seemed to have no shape," Gandar-Dower wrote. "After a while, I realized it was not alone. There was another, and another, and another."

They were assault craft carrying East Lancashire troops and Welsh Fusiliers to the beach nine miles out of town. When daylight came, his ship moved to 400 yards from shore, and he watched "little figures crawl slowly up cliffs of white chalk, following the convolutions of a winding track, halting, going on.... It was if we cut away half an ant hill, replaced by a pane of glass, and through the glass, were watching ants at war."

In fact, he was watching a feint attack like the one at Diego Suarez.

Croft-Cooke was coming in with the real landing force, headed straight for the docks. "It took an hour and a half to reach the shore," he related, "and before we had done, dawn had arrived. We could see Majunga in the rosy light of sunrise, a white city among palms. At first, it seemed peaceful enough, but as we were within earshot, we could hear the sound of machine guns, and we knew the French were resisting. We caught a glimpse of the Commandos hurrying up a narrow street and saw our men along the white sand of the beach."

The Commandos landed at 5:20, quickly overwhelmed the machine guns then swarmed into the town. Croft-Cooke followed, pushing his ever-present motorcycle through the surf and sand. "The fighting was almost over, but a few shots were still audible to give me the illusion of taking part in a fight for the town," he recalled.

The Commandos met only scattered resistance as they occupied the bank, post office, and residence of the regional administrator, and in 90 minutes, the battle—such as it was—ended with a dozen British dead. Commandos trying to flank the town had run into a far different, more determined opponent.

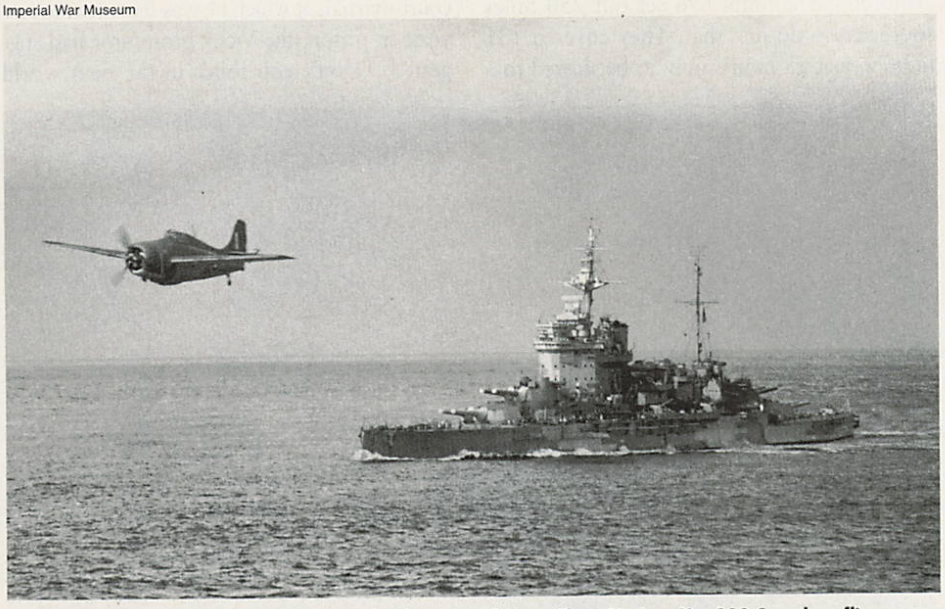
"As we traveled up the river," Fred Munson remembered, "the tide began to go out, and we began to run aground on a sandbank. The river was full of crocodiles, so before we could get into the water to lighten the craft and push them off the sandbanks, hand grenades were thrown into the river to keep the crocodiles at bay."

In Majunga, the garrison commander, Major Didier Martins, got caught in bed at the time of the attack but managed to get himself slightly wounded in the left elbow and, no doubt for the benefit of his Vichy superiors, made a show of presenting himself with a theatrically oversized sling.

"Did my men fight well?" he asked.

"Magnificently!" the British commander

Imperial War Museum



ABOVE: A Grumman Martlet fighter aircraft of the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm No. 888 Squadron flies past the old Queen Elizabeth-class battleship HMS *Warspite* off the coast of Madagascar. BELOW: As operations to secure Madagascar continue in November 1942, British soldiers dismantle a roadblock that has been erected to impede their overland progress.

National Archives

played along.

As at Antisare, finding a bugle to call surrender proved difficult. A young British officer was sent to the Martins home for a white flag. He found Madame Martins hysterically barricaded in her bedroom.

From outside the door, the officer explained why he was there and assured her that he was not going to rape her. The door finally creaked open, and a trembling hand passed out a broomstick and bed sheet. "A curious gaiety spread through the town at lunchtime," Croft-Cooke observed. "We were openly welcomed, and the hope was expressed we should occupy the capital before long."

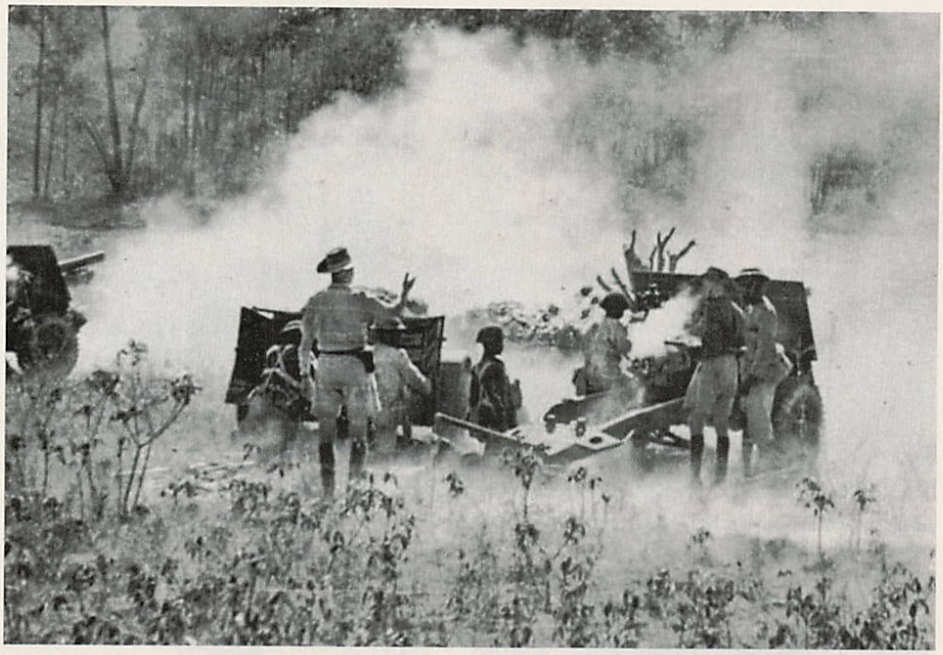
By then, the KAR and a South African armored car column had set out 250 miles southeast to do just that. They covered 131 miles in just 18 hours, only to be slowed to a crawl by the first of some 3,000 roadblocks Vichy forces were eventually to put up all over Madagascar. The KAR worked around the clock dismantling the obstacles and met their only serious opposition 150 miles from Atananarivo, at the mountain village of Ariba.

Senegalese troops kept the KAR under heavy machine-gun fire until a sergeant named Odillo, whose British officer had been killed, led his platoon around the Senegalese and then came screaming down on them wielding three-foot-long, curved panga machetes.

"After firing to the last, one of the Senegalese would jump out and try to scuttle through our lines. We dropped a number of them like rabbits," the KAR colonel said. Four of the KAR died in the fight, while the eight wounded were laid without rancor or bitterness alongside Senegalese casualties, though neither would accept being put next to a Malagasy conscript.

After 13 days, the column reached Atananarivo to be met by a Special Operations Executive operative, Royal Navy Lieutenant Peter Simpson Jones, standing by a Renault in a crisp, new tropical suit. He and a companion had delivered a radio set to another agent, but their dinghy had capsized in Madagascar's notoriously shark-infested waters while they were rowing out for pickup. The companion drowned, but Jones was rescued by a fisherman. At his court-martial, at which he was sentenced to five years in prison, the Vichy prosecutor had suggested, "Don't you think in the next world war,you might do better to join the artillery?"

Imperial War Museum



British colonial troops fire their field artillery pieces toward Vichy French entrenchments on Madagascar. Defending their government's sovereign territory, the Vichy soldiers were defeated after several sharp fights with the British forces. This action took place near the village of Ambositra.

Percy Mayer's piano-playing, radio key-tapping wife, who spent several anxious weeks expecting arrest, was also safe. Governor General Armand Annet had fled, and with no one to take the surrender, a British officer walked into the radio station to politely request airtime for a not quite historic announcement:

"At 5 PM, our troops occupied Atananrivo. Everything is quiet. That is all."

Five days earlier, the Jane portion of the operation had taken place. With the surf at Tamatave too rough for landings in the dark, the plan was to intimidate the town into surrender with an overwhelming show of naval force. "They might bluff up to the last minute, but not beyond it. The guns would never have to fire," Gandar-Dower believed, but he was proven wrong—for three minutes.

That was how long the British bombardment went on after the French had rejected a 10 AM ultimatum. They hoisted a white flag at 10:03. Gandar-Dower sloshed ashore, bowler hat on head, camera in one hand, typewriter in the other, to witness a great deal of activity—soldiers in firing positions, rushing about, kicking in doors–but no action. "It was," he wrote, "like a Hollywood assault, which was being held up by the failure of the other side to put in an appearance."

An old woman shuffled up to him to ask if the battle was over. It was, he said, and soon he and the British were marching into town, at their head, a young lady "in the shortest of bathing costumes and pair of first-class legs."

Even though Stream Line Jane had been successfully completed, the campaign for Madagascar would drag on for six senseless weeks. With a mix of defiance and delusion, Governor General Annet had sent off a crazed cable to Vichy: "Our available troops are preparing to resist every enemy advance with the same spirit which inspired our soldiers at Diego Suarez, at Majunga, at Atananarivo, where each time the defense became a page of heroism written by La France."

He had fled 190 miles south to Finanarantsoa, and the KAR had set off in pursuit. Gandar-Dower followed in a confiscated Citroen truck, bicycle, and pirogue, admitting, "We saw little of the war, but met with a great deal of curious adventure."

Rupert Croft-Cooke was having his own adventure with a lieutenant and a half-dozen soldiers searching for a French lieutenant with 100 conscripts. Along the way, they had encountered crocodiles, chasing them off with rifle shots. They later came upon a female English missionary, alone, forgotten, and resigned to staying after over 40 years.

"Five hours of being paddled up a crocodile-infested river in Madagascar to a collection of native huts does not prepare one for such an encounter," Croft-Cooke wrote. Then he and the lieutenant finally had their discussion with the French officer:

"You have, of course, some soldiers?" the Frenchman asked.

"Yes," the British one replied. "We have some soldiers."

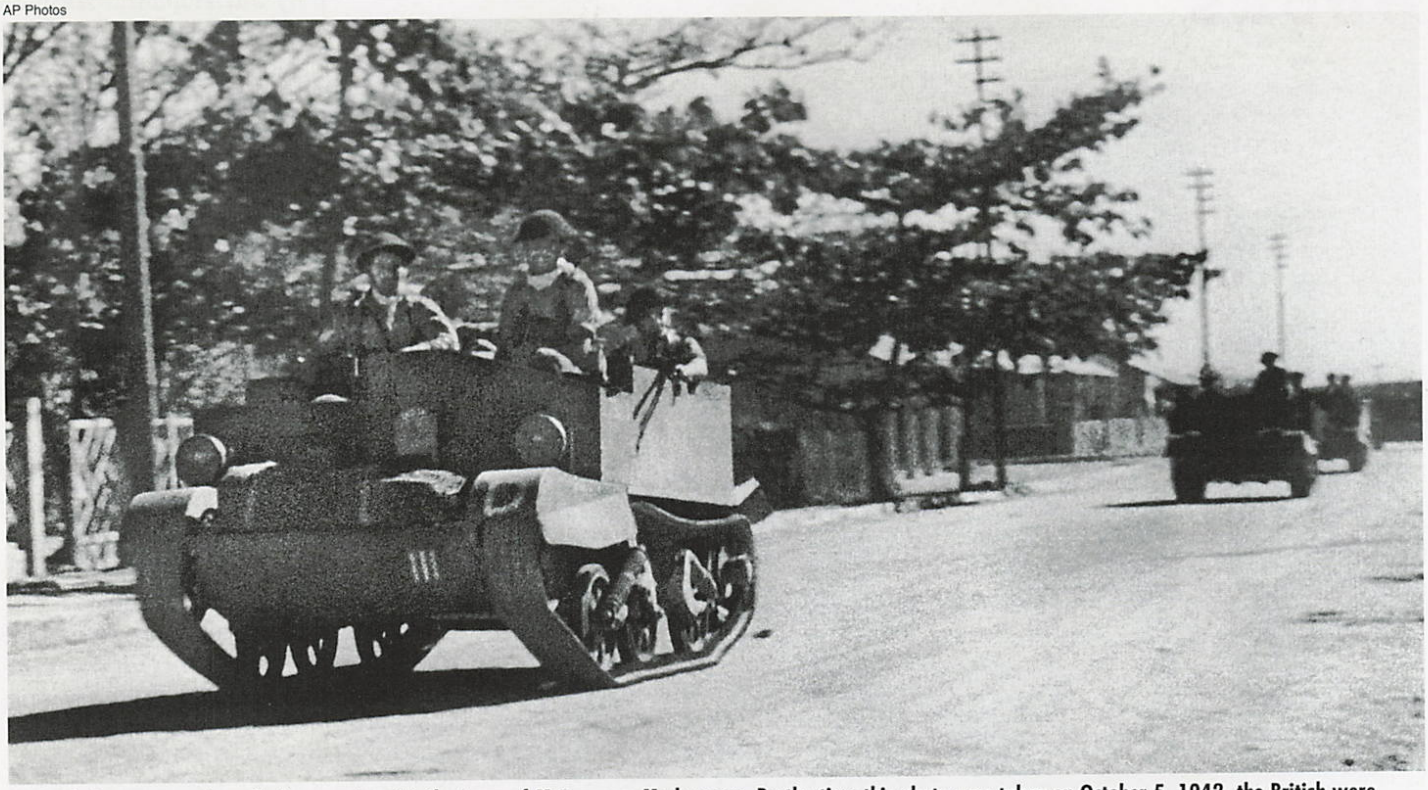
"Naturally, they are armed?"

"Naturally."

"Automatic weapons, I presume?"

"Tommy guns."

AP Photos



A British Bren gun carrier rolls down a street in the town of Majunga on Madagascar. By the time this photo was taken on October 5, 1942, the British were gaining control of the island. A month later the Vichy surrender went into effect.

"You have, perhaps, some other forces in the area?"

"We have."

"With some artillery, no doubt?"

"Certainly." It was back at the coast.

"Ah. You will excuse me a moment." He immediately wired Annet, "Occupied today by British forces armed with automatic weapons and supported by artillery."

The campaign became one more of annoyance than action as the stubborn Vichy put up hundreds more roadblocks. "When I shut my eyes and think of Madagascar, I see one enormous roadblock," Gandar-Dower remembered.

The French laid melon-sized rocks exactly 20 yards apart for miles and erected 18-foot stone walls. In the last significant action, the KAR turned an attempted ambush on itself, marching 30 miles around to attack from the rear, killing 40 and taking 800 prisoners. The Malagasy, always quick to run from battle, were now running away for good, deserting in droves. Even worse for the Vichy, law and order were breaking down. Croft-Cooke was an official witness at the execution by firing squad of a Malagasy for the unprecedented murder of a French settler.

After a five-week march, the KAR reached Finanarantsoa, only to find that Annet had fled another 190 miles southwest. With the KAR still in pursuit and after almost being killed when his staff car was strafed from the air, Annet finally sent his aide, Captain Louis Fauche, to negotiate surrender. In a 650-mile march, the KAR had routed 6,000 defenders for a loss of five British officers killed, six wounded and 20 Africans killed, 76 wounded.

Fauche agreed to surrender with the curious condition that it did not go into effect for another 10 hours, until 12:01 AM on November 6, 1942.

The reason turned out to be, to the very end, about career concerns. Having the campaign last for exactly six months qualified the French for medals, promotions, and even cash awards, but any chance was dashed days later. To cap the fruitless futility of it all in Madagascar, the Germans occupied Vichy France.

Churchill was modestly satisfied with the campaign for Madagascar. "We had gained full military control over an island of high strategic importance to the safety of our communication with the Near and Far East," he noted. "The Madagascar episode was in its secrecy of planning and tactical execution a model of amphibious operations. The news arrived at a time when we sorely needed success. It was in fact for long months the only sign of good and efficient war direction of which the British public were conscious."

De Gaulle was angered at being left out. Kenneth Gandar-Dower, by contrast, later wrote, "It was for me a fascinating experience, an isolated six weeks of strange adventure." He admitted that it was "certainly more than an exercise, but very much less than a war.... The French consciously or unconsciously conducted their defense according to formula. The first was 'maximum results for minimum expenditure.' The second: 'resist as long and as fiercely as you can without loss of life—either French or British.'" Gandar-Dower's exotic adventuring and writing ended when his transport was torpedoed en route to Ceylon on February 12, 1944.

Rupert Croft-Cooke soon left Madagascar for his next and last wartime posting, India. He spent most of his postwar life in other out-of-the-way locales, including Morocco and Tunisia, after serving six months in prison for homosexual activity in England in 1953, but he was through with Madagascar. He later wrote, "I shall never go back to Madagascar with its blood-red earth and creeping shadows."

He continued with his prolific, if ultimately forgotten, writing and in 1953 published his account of events in Madagascar titled *The Blood-Red Island*. Tragically, Madagascar would become that, and not just from the soil. An uprising in 1947 against the French was crushed with perhaps 100,000 dead, and independence in 1958 was marked by more violence and tribal strife.

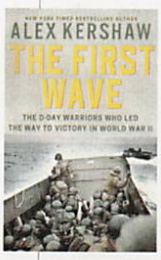
Author John W. Osborn, Jr., is resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He has written for WWII History *on a variety of topics.*

By Christopher Miskimon

Pathfinders Pave the Way

The first wave of Allied troops on D-Day cleared the way for thousands of soldiers who would liberate Western Europe.

CAPTAIN FRANK LILLYMAN DRIFTED DOWN TOWARD A FRENCH FIELD IN THE predawn darkness of June 6, 1944. Frank was a pathfinder, one of the paratroopers assigned to prepare the way for the main airborne drop on D-Day. That drop was only hours away as Frank watched the ground rush toward him. He touched down and quickly slapped a magazine into his Thompson sub-machine gun. There were shapes moving in the darkness, and he worried they were enemy soldiers, ready to open fire. He pulled out his "cricket," a small device for telling friend from foe. It made a click-clack noise; if the other person replied with his device, you knew he was friendly. Frank clicked his device but got no reply. As he readied to fire his Thompson, the shadowy figure let out a "moo." It was a cow.



Moving on, he quickly made contact with seven men from his stick. Though they were a mile from their assigned drop zone, they made plans to set up their guide lights where they were. There was no time to move. Suddenly, a German machine gun opened up from a hedgerow; Frank sent two men to silence it. A few minutes later he heard the crump of a grenade, and the enemy gun went silent. Next, a pair of Germans on bicycles appeared on a nearby road, apparently attracted by the sound of the machine gun. Two more paratroopers strung a wire across the road at neck height, secured to two trees. The bicyclists both hit the wire, almost decapitated as they flipped backward to the ground.

Frank next spotted a nearby church and made contact with the priest within. Soon they set up their guide lights around the church, lighting them at 12:30 AM, only 15 minutes after they hit the ground. It was time to wait for the paratroopers who formed the first wave for the 101st Airborne Division, but there was more work for Frank and his men that night. A scout brought word of a nearby German position containing an antiaircraft gun. It was next to a farmhouse where the German gun crew seemed to be billeted. Frank took two men with him and went to the farmhouse. A Frenchman smoking a pipe stood in the doorway. He jerked his thumb toward the stairs and said, "Boche," indicating Germans. The Americans crept up the stairs and found a German asleep dressed in white pajamas. They killed him and took a bottle of champagne sitting beside the bed. By 1 AM, the first paratroopers appeared overhead.

Pathfinders of the 3rd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, were among the first airborne troopers to descend into Normandy on D-Day, marking drop zones for those that followed.

The success of the D-Day invasion was due to the actions of thousands of individuals acting in concert, following an overall plan toward a common goal. The stories of many of these men are relayed in exciting prose in *The First Wave: The D-Day Warriors Who Led the Way to Victory in World War II* (Alex Kershaw, Dutton Caliber Publishing, New York, 2019, 368 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover).

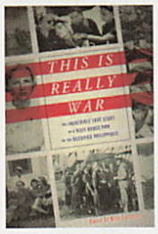
The D-Day landings were a pivotal event in the war, and there have been numerous books written on the fighting of June 6, 1944. What makes this book stand out is its focus on the pathfinders, airborne troops, commandos, Rangers, and others who went ashore ahead of the main force. The book focuses on the close combat these soldiers faced as they set up landing lights, captured bridges, destroyed gun emplacements, and then often held them against counterattacks until they were relieved. It is full of stories of fierce actions as Allied soldiers seized the initiative from the occupying German Army.

The author smoothly blends the experiences of a wide variety of D-Day participants into an engaging narrative, describing the chaos of combat and how men overcame difficulty and danger to accomplish their missions and support each other. The book is fast paced, quickly going from soldier to soldier as the various operations they undertook occurred. The author also exposes the ugliness and fear of battle in a way that highlights the dedication of the men involved and their courage under fire. This new book ranks with Kershaw's other best-selling works on the war and those who fought it.

Combat Normandy 1944: Hitlerjugend Soldier versus Canadian Soldier (David Greentree, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2019, 80 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $20.00, softcover)

In June 1944, Canadian troops faced soldiers of the 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend. These Germans were drawn from the ranks of the Hitler Youth organization. They were inexperienced as soldiers but indoctrinated to be loyal and fervent servants of the Third Reich. The division's leadership were veteran officers and NCOs; they took these teenage boys and formed them into a fighting force that bitterly resisted the Allied advance. They fought the Canadians several times, most notably at Authie, Bretteville, and Hill 168. A number of Canadian prisoners were massacred by the Hitlerjugend during the fighting, leading to acrimony between two groups already locked in the life or death struggle of combat.

Osprey's Combat Series compares the training, equipment, weapons, tactics, and organization of famously opposed fighting forces throughout history. In this new edition, the 34th in the series, the author assesses how effective the Canadian Army and Hitlerjugend troops were when pitted against one another, using the three battles mentioned to highlight his conclusions. The narrative is well organized and interesting, looking at the reality on the ground rather than propaganda and myth. The book is also well illustrated with numerous maps, full color original artwork, and a large number of photographs to support the text and give the reader a full appreciation of the covered events.



This Is Really War: The Incredible True Story of a Navy Nurse POW in the Philippines (Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, 2019, 318 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $28.99, hardcover)

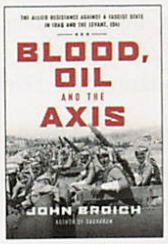
In 1940, Dorothy Still looked forward to her new assignment. A U.S. Navy nurse who joined the service in 1937, by January 1940 she had arrived in the Philippines, ready to work at the hospital on the Cavite Naval Base. At first the posting was a pleasure; Dorothy attended dances, dated sailors, and enjoyed herself when off duty. By 1941, however, war clouds began to loom. Dependents and families went back to the States, and the sailors drilled and trained. Soon the war started, and she became a prisoner of the Japanese. Despite maltreatment and malnourishment, she and the other captive nurses strived to maintain their military discipline and humanity. In mid-1943, the nurses were transferred to a new camp in the countryside named Los Baños. Most of the inmates were civilians, and Dorothy did her best to help them until the camp was liberated in 1945 during a daring airborne operation.

The plight of nurses and civilians trapped in the Philippines during World War II is seen through this new biography of one of those nurses thrust into the horror of the Japanese POW camps. It reveals how they rose to the challenge of survival and endured hardships most Americans cannot imagine today. This well-written book is full of engaging personal stories that maintain the reader's interest.

Katusha, Girl Soldier of the Great Patriotic War (Wayne Vansant, Dead Reckoning/ Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2019, 572 pp., illustrations, $36.00, softcover)

Ekaterina Tymoshenko, nicknamed "Katusha," was a Ukrainian teenager when World War II came to the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Like many of her countrymen, she thought the Germans might liberate them from the scourge of Stalin and communism. Soon she discovered they were even worse. As friends and family around her were killed or taken away as slave laborers in the Reich, Katusha joined her uncle as a partisan, conducting hit and run raids against the Nazis. By the end of 1942, she joined the Red Army, which trained her as a tank crewman. Combat followed, at Stalingrad and later at Kursk, where she took part in tank battles against the toughest and best the Germans had. Along the way she lost comrades, found new friends, and learned that she was fighting the brutal fascists on behalf of the equally brutal Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, the Nazis were the invaders and had to be defeated first. Katusha saw the war through to its bloody end in Berlin.

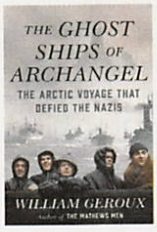
A new wave of World War II comics and graphic novels has arisen lately, and this is one of the best examples. The author gives great attention to detail and strives for accuracy in his historical facts. Instead of playing loose with the history to make a more dramatic story, here the history is kept accurate and the characters fit into the momentous events around them. The artwork is also authentic, with uniforms, weapons, and equipment drawn accurately. This work is equally well suited to either adult or young adult readers.



Blood, Oil and the Axis: The Allied Resistance Against a Fascist State in Iraq and the Levantine, 1941 (John Broich, Abrams Press, New York, 2019, 368 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover)

The fighting in North Africa was not Great Britain's only problem in the Middle East in the spring of 1941. A group of pro-Axis Iraqi officers offered to make their nation's oil available to the Third Reich in exchange for assistance throwing out the British. At the same time in Syria the Vichy French occupiers there agreed to provide airfields and refueling for German aircraft supporting the Iraqis' attempt at revolt. Britain's Middle East Command scrambled to assemble a scratch force of ground and air assets to defeat this new threat. Troops from India and Jordan joined a small number of British soldiers, and together they marched against the revolt with the support of a handful of aircraft, many of them obsolete trainers. Also involved were groups of Jewish Palestinians, Australians, and Free French, making the expedition truly international.

The Iraqi Revolt of 1941—a lesser known episode of World War II—is revealed in great detail in this new work. The author is an authority on British history and successfully makes this work more than just a dry retelling of a campaign. The narrative is full of first-person accounts by participants at all levels, making the book engaging to read. Emphasis is placed on recognizing the truly international and multiethnic flavor of the campaign.

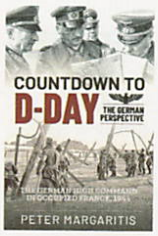


The Ghost Ships of Archangel: The Arctic Voyage That Defied the Nazis (William Geroux, Viking Press, New York, 2019, 337 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $28.00, hardcover)

Of all the convoys that plied the northern route to the Soviet Union during World War II, the one designated PQ-17 is the most famous due to the disaster that befell it. In July 1942, PQ-17, carrying $1 billion worth of war material, came under Nazi attack, and the individual ships received the order to scatter. The idea was to make the ships harder for the Germans to find and attack, but the loss of cohesion only made it easier for them to be singled out and targeted. Four ships broke off from the convoy and sailed farther north, hoping to hide among the ice floes.

It was the height of the arctic summer, so there was constant daylight to help guide German planes, submarines, and surface ships, including the infamous battleship *Tirpitz*. These four vessels dodged both ice and submarines on their way to the Soviet Union.

The ordeal of PQ-17 is well known but usually only in terms of ships and cargo lost. This book puts a human face on the events, enlightening the reader about the service, dedication, and sacrifices of the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II. These men were reinforced with U.S. Navy and Royal Navy reservists, who are also highlighted in this book. The work is well written and interesting, with many personal accounts of the men who survived the destruction of PQ-17 and arrived at their destination.

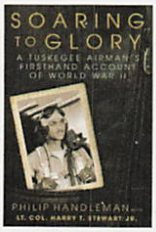


Countdown to D-Day, the German Perspective: The German High Command in Occupied France, 1944 (Peter Margaritis, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2019, 607 pp., maps, photographs, notes, appendices, bibliography, $34.95, hardcover)

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel was appointed the General Inspector of the Atlantic Wall defenses, designed to repel the inevitable Allied invasion. What he found shocked him. The wall was woefully inadequate and preparations sorely lacking. He tried to work with the theater commander, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, but the man seemed more interested in living comfortably in Paris and awaiting eventual defeat. In Normandy, General Erich Marcks tried to follow Rommel's directives but lacked the men and material to do so. He believed the invasion would come in his sector, but no one else did. Other German leaders made their own desperate plans while subject to the whims of a leader who no longer seemed connected to reality. Still, they soldiered on, doing their duty as best they could.

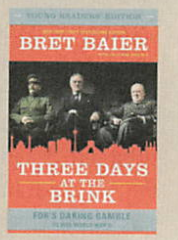
The critical period of December 1943 to June 1944 is the subject of this new work. The book takes a chapter for each month in between and gives a day by day account of what the German high command was doing to get ready for the beginning of the end of their Reich. The detail is impressive, and there are two high-quality photographic inserts. There are extensive endnotes to back up the author's conclusions, making this book a handy reference for students of the Normandy Campaign.

Soaring to Glory: A Tuskegee Airman's Firsthand Account of World War II (Philip Handleman with Lt. Col. Harry T. Stewart Jr., Regnery History, Washington, D.C., 2019, 230pp., photographs, index, $29.99, hardcover)

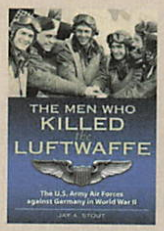


The now famous Tuskegee Airmen fought two wars simultaneously. The first was against Nazi Germany, taking the fight to the skies over Europe. The second was against the institutionalized racism that nearly prevented them from flying in the first place. Harry Stewart flew with the 332nd Fighter Group, popularly known as the Red Tails. He joined the unit in early 1945 and flew 43

New and Noteworthy

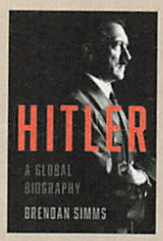


Three Days at the Brink: FDR's Daring Gamble to Win World War II (Bret Baier, William Morrow, 2019, $28.99, hardcover) This is a reappraisal of the 1943 Tehran Conference. The author argues it was more important than the later meetings that overshadow it.



The Men Who Killed the Luftwaffe: The U.S. Army Air Forces Against Germany in World War II (Jay A. Stout, Stackpole Books, 2019, $24.95, softcover) The Air Corps went from a force barely able to defend the country to a world-spanning war winner in just a few years. This new work reveals the men who made that happen.

Japan Triumphant: The Far East Campaign 1941-1942 (Philip Jowett, Pen and Sword Books, 2019, $24.95, softcover) Imperial Japan had a short time to run rampant across the Asia-Pacific region. This photo book documents that period with more than 200 images.

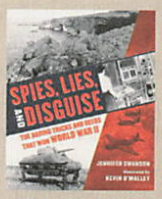


Hitler: A Global Biography (Brendan Simms, Basic Books, 2019, $40.00, hardcover) This biography takes a new look at Hitler and his fear of the United States as an enemy.

The Undercover Nazi Hunter: Exposing Subterfuge and Unmasking Evil in Post-War Germany (Wolfe Frank, Frontline Books, 2019, $39.95, hardcover) Wolfe Frank was an anti-Nazi who fled Germany before the war. He later worked as a translator at the Nuremburg Trials and did undercover reporting in Germany after the war.

Tempest V vs Fw 190D-9: 1944-45 (Robert Forsyth, Osprey Books, 2019, $22.00, softcover) These late war fighter aircraft ranked among the best piston-engine planes of the war. This book covers their design history, combat performance, and the pilots who flew them.

German Submarine U-1105 'Black Panther:" The Naval Archaeology of a U-Boat (Aaron Stephan Hamilton, Osprey Publishing, 2019, $35.00, hardcover) *U-1105* was a late-war submarine equipped with many newly developed technical innovations. Sunk in the Potomac River postwar, it was rediscovered and researched.



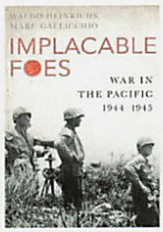
Spies, Lies and Disguise: The Daring Tricks and Deeds That Won World War II (Jennifer Swanson, Bloomsbury, 2019, $21.99, hardcover) This children's book teaches the reader about the unconventional operations and tricks that occurred during the war.

Stug III and IV: German Army, Waffen-SS and Luftwaffe, Western Front 1944-1945 (Dennis Oliver, Pen and Sword Books, 2019, $22.95, softcover) The Sturmgeschutz self-propelled gun was one of the backbone vehicles of the German military. This book describes their history and discusses building scale models of them.

Atlas of the Blitzkrieg 1939-41 (Robert Kirchubel, Osprey Books, 2019, $60.00, hardcover) This high-quality, coffee table book combines excellent maps from the invasions of Poland through Greece and Yugoslavia. Descriptive text accompanies the maps.

combat missions, including one in which he downed three German planes. Harry was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for his service and after the war became a flight instructor back at Tuskegee. Continuing his service allowed him to be present as the new United States Air Force desegregated and the slow march of civil rights began in earnest. Harry retired as a lieutenant colonel.

This memoir relays the twin stories of wartime and prejudice, revealing how the young African American men of the Tuskegee Airmen suffered, persevered, and ultimately triumphed over multiple adversities. The author is a noted aviation historian with almost two dozen related books to his credit. His cooperation with Lt. Col. Stewart resulted in a very readable book, with prose that keeps the reader's interest page after page. It effectively relates the subject's experiences to the wider events of the war and society at the time.



Implacable Foes: War in the Pacific 1944-1945 (Waldo Heinrichs and Marc Gallicchio, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2019, 728 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $24.95, softcover)

By 1944 it was clear that Imperial Japan was losing World War II in the Pacific. The United States and its allies were slowly but inexorably advancing across the broad front of the Pacific Ocean on the water and on the numerous islands vital to the combatants' plans and aims. With surrender an unthinkable option, the Japanese engaged in increasingly desperate defensive actions in the hope of exhausting their opponents and making the price of victory high enough to ensure a negotiated peace. Such a peace was unacceptable to the Allies, so a grueling war of attrition took place, causing horrible casualties and heated political debates and ensuring the human cost would be staggeringly brutal. The dropping of the atomic bombs in August 1945 finally ended the conflict and confirmed the butcher's bill.

This new history of the Pacific War's last two years is written by two eminent scholars, one a veteran of World War II whose unit redeployed to the Pacific for the aborted invasion of Japan. They look at the fighting from the points of view of soldiers on the ground up to the politicians and high-ranking military officers making the decisions of grand strategy. The book is well researched and successfully relates how war is a human effort even at the highest levels of leadership, requiring perseverance and courage to be brought to a conclusion. □

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Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

AN ALTERNATE HISTORY WWII GAME GOES BEHIND ENEMY LINES, AND STRATEGY SPANS THE AGES IN A UNIQUE SPIN ON THE GENRE.

BROKEN LINES

PUBLISHER SUPER.COM • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** SWITCH, PC • **AVAILABLE** 2020

Some war games are all about the conflicts themselves, honing in on the minutiae of the tactics that walk the line between victory and defeat. In the case of *Broken Lines*—an upcoming strategy outing from publisher Super.com and developer PortaPlay—we find ourselves gazing back into the past through a unique narrative lens. *Broken Lines* may technically be an alternate history spin on World War II, but it's one that strives to put characters and story at the forefront when it launches on Nintendo Switch and Windows PC sometime in Q1 2020.

Broken Lines is set in Eastern Europe during World War II, combining a compelling narrative with tactical gameplay and some interesting roguelike elements that hint at inspiration from other heavyweights of the tactics genre. The story finds your squad crash-landed behind enemy lines with nothing in the way of leadership or intel to call upon for support. Teamwork becomes paramount as this steadfast group of soldiers attempt to fight their way back home, but not everyone is going to agree about what is or isn't the right thing to do along the way.

The most intriguing aspect of this focus on narrative and character is the way PortaPlay plans to make each member of the squad fit into the larger dynamic. Some characters will want to know more about how they ended up stuck behind enemy lines in the first place, while others won't be as keen to risk life and limb to escape. You may even find some members hinting at the possibility of desertion, but ultimately it's going to be up to the player to guide them and make the overarching decisions that will hopefully take them home when the smoke finally clears.

When new dangers appear on the horizon in *Broken Lines,* the gameplay kicks into a "pause and play" style that gives players time to think and decide how to respond to each new threat. Soldiers only move when each phase of action begins, so there's plenty of breathing room to make the types of tough calls that could bring them closer to home or deeper into a truly dire wartime scenario. However you choose to move forward, your actions won't just affect the soldiers under your command, they will impact the region they're in and the folks who happen to live there.

From early looks at *Broken Lines,* it seems as if the key to success comes down to a delicate balance of making the maneuvers that seem correct to you and going down a stray route here or there in an effort to keep morale high. Each squad mate is very opinionated, so going against them time and time again will only lower their spirits and make the going that much more difficult for the whole.

If all goes according to plan, this character-driven story will shed further light on the impact war has on the mental health of the brave soldiers mired in combat. *Broken Lines* also hints at further horrors of war beyond the way it affects the human psyche, so we'll have to see just how alternate this alternate history tale ends up being. For now, look for this one to kick off the new year in strategic style.

WAR SELECTION

PUBLISHER GLYPH WORLDS • **GENRE** SHOOTER • **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW (EARLY ACCESS)

Occasionally, we come across games that fit into the World War II era in strange ways. Sometimes they come in the form of alternate histories like *Broken Lines,* and others present looser, yet nonetheless interesting, connections to the era. The latter category is where we find *War Selection,* a strategy game that isn't content with just one era of war; it aims to span them all.

War Selection bills itself as a "pseudo-historical strategy game," and that's a generous way of saying it breezes through the ages and gives players access to the tools and weaponry of eight different historical eras. Players start their tactical journey in the Stone Age, and as they develop their culture through each match, they'll find themselves progressing through to the modern day. Eventually, you'll have seen it all, from primitive tents and units that are literally wooly mammoths to strong stone castles and, finally, tanks and other implements of modern warfare.

Thanks to all of this merry time-skipping, *War Selection* boasts over 100 buildings and more than 200 unit types across the ages, with support for up to 62 players in a single match on procedurally generated maps. There are also both naval and land troops available throughout the game's various modes, which include a horde mode, team matches, free-for-all matches, and both regular and team Armageddon. In Armageddon mode, countries which comprise the smallest area will find themselves gradually facing the threat of meteorites, so it pays to build up your defenses and take as much as you can from your opponents.

At the time of this writing, *War Selection* is still in Early Access on Steam, so it has quite a few kinks to work out during its ongoing development. It's free to play with some in-app purchases, so there's a low risk of entry, but you do currently have to sign up for a monthly subscription to get access to all the modes. If Glyph Worlds can hone their focus a bit more on this and figure out a better method of monetization, *War Selection* might have some decent legs for an indie strategy outing.□

Profiles

Continued from page 18

On a visit to Germany in 1950, Rudel divorced his wife, who had refused to follow him to Argentina with their two children. She had sold Rudel's medals, including his Knight's Cross with Diamonds, to an American collector. Rudel continued to do well in his professional life as a representative for Siemens and other manufactures.

But controversy continued to follow him. With the help of Paraguayan President Alfredo Stroessner, Rudel protected notorious war criminal Josef Mengele for three decades. But Mengle was not fond of Rudel, comparing Rudel's opinions to the "stupid [anti-Nazi] material pouring down on young Germans since 1945." Rudel nevertheless advocated renewed aggression against the Soviet Union and derided members of the German Army who failed to fully support Hitler. Returning to live in West Germany, Rudel joined the right wing German Reich party. In 1976 Rudel's acceptance to an officer's evening of the Immelmann Wing caused a stir in the Bundeswehr because of Rudel's "activity in a neo-Nazi party."

Rudel was not destined to have a long life, succumbing at the age of 66 to a brain hemorrhage on December 21, 1982. Buried in Dornhausen, Rudel's funeral was attended by old comrades, some wearing the Knight's Cross, some giving a last Hitler salute. .

Rudel's bravery, skill, self-sacrifice, and nearly boundless endurance cannot be denied. Rudel risked his own life six times to rescue downed comrades. He himself was shot down 30 times by flak, never by an enemy plane. During his 2,530 combat missions, unmatched by any pilot, Rudel single-handedly destroyed 547 tanks, 2,000 ground targets, the Soviet battleship *Marat,* two cruisers, and a destroyer. Stalin put a ransom of 100,000 rubles on Rudel's head. Schoerner did not exaggerate much when he praised Rudel as being "worth an entire division."

In his riveting war memoir, *Stuka Pilot,* Rudel comes across as a likable, heroic, and inspiring figure. Rudel's noble characteristics are difficult to reconcile with his close association to Hitler's clique and to far-right causes after the war, but Rudel was never accused of any war crime. Indoctrinated in Nazi ideology at an early age, he clung faithfully to what he deemed righteous and either disbelieved or ignored its horrific consequences. Perhaps British fighter ace Douglas Bader, who did not agree with a number of Rudel's beliefs, best summed up Rudel, concluding that he was "by any standard, a gallant chap." □

Peleliu

Continued from page 63

Rupertus, he could not bring himself to do so.

Puller's condition and his tenuous grasp of reality were the final straws for Geiger. The corps commander believed that Puller should have flanked and enveloped the Umurbrogol rather than attacking it head on. Geiger proceeded immediately to Rupertus's command post and told Rupertus that the 1st Marine Regiment was finished as a fighting unit. The regiment was to be removed not just from the line but from the battle altogether, and sent back to Pavuvu where the unit could be rebuilt for future campaigns. He told Rupertus he intended to replace them with the Army's 321st Infantry. "At this, General Rupertus became greatly alarmed and requested that no such attention be taken," Coleman wrote, "stating that he was sure he could secure the island in another day or two." Geiger overruled him. The battle was over for the 1st Marines, and the Army would replace them.

The Marines of the 1st Regiment had literally given everything they could give at the Umurbrogol. They had fought, sweated, bled, and cried. They had performed with a gallantry that was nearly superhuman. Indeed, General Smith later wondered how they were able to capture as much ground as they did. Now, at last, thanks to Geiger's intercession, their hell on earth was finally over. As they left the line, one of them said: "We're not a regiment. We're the survivors of a regiment." Another one later added: "We were no longer even human beings."

Geiger's decision brought an end to the costliest amphibious assault in Marine Corps history. The Marines lost 6,786 men killed or wounded at Peleliu, including a staggering 1,672 casualties suffered by the 1st Regiment in 200 hours of fighting. The 1st Battalion, 1st Regiment alone suffered a 71 percent casualty rate. By the time it was withdrawn, only 74 men were left standing from nine rifle companies. Pfc. Eugene B. Sledge, author of the classic World War II memoir *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* later wrote: "We in the 5th Marines had many a dead or wounded friend to report about from our ranks, but the men in the 1st Marines had so many it was appalling."

In some ways the divisional commander, William Rupertus, was the final casualty of Peleliu. After the campaign he returned stateside in November 1944 to become commandant of the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, Virginia. Worn out and shaken by the meat grinder at Peleliu, Rupertus died of a heart attack in March 1945. □

Insight

Continued from page 31

tries can help your country."

Both Churchill and Roosevelt went on to report that shiploads of supplies had been dispatched to the USSR, and they proposed a high-level meeting to take place in Moscow in the near future. Maisky admitted in his memoirs that, "in addition to everything else, British Lend-Lease greatly facilitated our receipt of American Lend-Lease." Churchill's granting of Lend-Lease materials to the Soviets on September 5, 1941, was a significant precedent that enabled Roosevelt to extend the Lend-Lease Act to the USSR, since there were groups in America that strongly objected to aiding the Soviets without payment. Upon being informed by Churchill about the basis of British Lend-Lease to the USSR, Stalin responded on September 13, 1941, "Please accept my thanks for the promise of monthly British aid in aluminum, aircraft, and tanks. I can but be glad that the British government contemplates this aid, not as a transaction of selling and buying aircraft, aluminum and tanks, but in the shape of comradely cooperation."

At the end of August, Churchill cabled Stalin, "I have been searching for any way to give you help in your splendid resistance, pending the long-term arrangements which we are discussing with the United States of America.... You will, I am sure, realize that fighter aircraft are the foundation of our home defence, besides which we are trying to obtain air superiority in Libya and also to provide Turkey so as to bring her in on our side. Nevertheless, I could send 200 more Hurricanes, making 440 fighters in all." This offer by Churchill promised no chance of fulfilling the Soviet dictator's massive request list for aid. Thus, as the fall of 1941 approached, Churchill still had only a rather chilly alliance with Stalin, whose paranoia about Britain's "temporizing policies" was a chief obstacle to more cordial relations.

On September 4, Ambassador Maisky delivered Stalin's response to Churchill's offer of additional fighter aircraft, stating, "I must say that these aircraft ... cannot seriously change the situation of the eastern front." Maisky continued: "If Russia were defeated, how could Britain win?" The suspicion between Stalin and Churchill was still paramount. Churchill's permanent undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, Sir Alexander Cadogan, noted that Stalin suspected Britain's dalliance was motivated by thoughts of Germany and Russia destroying each other, while Churchill was extremely wary that the Soviet Union would

make another armistice with Hitler.

History must accord Churchill praise that he was at least candid with Stalin about Britain's inaction over a second front. He cabled the dictator on September 6, "Although we should shrink from no exertion, there is in fact no possibility of any British action in the West except air action, which would draw the German forces from the East before winter sets in. There is no chance whatever of a second front being formed in the Balkans without the help of Turkey."

At least Churchill the historian was aware of Napoleon's fate before Moscow in 1812, when the harsh Russian winter arrived. Stalin, however, was still unmoved by Churchill's response and stated to the Politburo, "What a revolting answer!" Churchill did not have to wait long for nature's intervention on the Eastern Front; the first snows began to fall on September 12. Stalin was not just rude to Churchill in his official correspondence. At a meeting with an Anglo-American mission headed by Lord Beaverbrook and Averell Harriman, the latter being Roosevelt's personal Lend-Lease envoy to Britain, Stalin chided the pair, "The paucity of your offers clearly shows that you want to see the Soviet Union defeated."

Churchill, too, had suspicions about the motives of the United States. The prime minister was worried that Roosevelt and his main emissary, Hopkins, would preferentially shunt weapons to the Soviet Union at the expense of aid given to Great Britain. This thought was to plague Churchill throughout the war, even though he knew that during 1941, only one percent of Britain's weapons were to come from Lend-Lease with the United States.

As the Moscow assault was underway in early October, Stalin demanded that Churchill send 25-30 British divisions to the Soviet Union. The prime minister sought the recommendations of his war cabinet on October 27, and both concluded that Stalin's request could not be met. On November 7, Stalin rifled off a cable to Churchill in which he harangued, "There is no definite understanding between our two countries concerning war aims and plans for the postwar organization of peace. Secondly, there is no treaty between the USSR and Great Britain on mutual military aid in Europe against Hitler."

Stalin did not mince words: without a clarification of these issues, "there [would] be no mutual trust." On November 10, when Churchill was shown the cable from Stalin, the prime minister flew into a rage: "Why did Stalin need to add such a tone to our correspondence?... I can't tolerate this.... Who benefits from it? Neither you nor us, only Hitler! I was the one who, without any doubt, volunteered to help Russia on 22 June. Who needs these debates and disagreements? We are fighting, and we will keep fighting for our lives whatever happens!"

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Soviet Premier Josef Stalin, and American envoy Averell Harriman (left to right) confer during the Moscow Conference of August 1942. Harriman represented President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the conference. The alliance that defeated the Nazis in World War II brought truth to the old adage, 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend.'

As a result of this Churchillian outburst, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was invited to Moscow to smooth over the mutual distrust. There must have been some rapprochement or, perhaps to Stalin's delight, the Russian winter continued to worsen on the Moscow front, because the Soviet dictator wished Churchill "hearty birthday greetings" on November 29.

In November 1941, Churchill's hopes resided in General Claude Auchinleck's Operation Crusader to liberate Tobruk and eject Rommel from the Egyptian frontier. The operation achieved some of its immediate military goals, but it failed to change any political fortunes for Britain. Vichy France and Spain remained neutral. Likewise, the United States, despite Roosevelt's leanings, also remained neutral since only Congress had the constitutional power to declare war, and that body was still very much isolationist. Nature intervened on December 5, however, when temperatures fell to -32 degrees Fahrenheit outside Moscow. Stalin counterattacked the exhausted and unprepared Germans, forcing them to retreat days before the United States entered into the conflict, courtesy of the Japanese.

There were some areas in which Churchill and Stalin actively participated together. After the suppression of Rashid Ali's pro-German revolt in Iraq in June 1941, there was a suspicion that a similar event might occur in Iran, since Rashid Ali, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, and their supporters had fled to Iran when their insurrection was beaten back. By the end of July, Churchill had decided that Britain and Russia could cooperate in securing Iran and her oil supplies for the Allied cause, as well as creating an overland route of supply to the Soviet Union. On December 6, 1941, at Stalin's request, Britain declared war on Finland, Hungary, and Romania, since troops from these three countries were actively combating the Soviets.

Historical revisionists have pondered just how much information Stalin received from the British in regard to a German invasion, and furthermore, what Churchill's intent at disseminating such intelligence findings actually was. Even Maisky stated, "I had more than once already let Moscow know that an attack by Hitlerite Germany was close, almost around the corner."

On June 21, Ambassador Cripps met with Maisky in London and informed him, "We have reliable information that this attack will take place tomorrow 22 June.... You know that Hitler always attacks on Sundays.... I wanted to inform you of this." Dutifully, Maisky sent yet another urgent cipher message about this communication to Moscow, yet Stalin chose to ignore the warnings. Such was the nature of the distrustful relationship between Churchill and Stalin, which became an uneasy alliance after the German invasion commenced on June 22, 1941.

Jon Diamond practices medicine and resides in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is the author of a book about Field Marshal Archibald Wavell in Osprey Publications' Command series and a frequent contributor to WWII History.

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